

**Mulholland Drive! From Hell! The X-Files!**

# Wrapped in Plastic

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**Naomi Watts Interview!**





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*Johnny Depp and Heather Graham star in From Hell*

# Wrapped in Plastic

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Front cover of Naomi Watts and Laura Elena Harring from *Mulholland Drive*; photo by Melissa Moseley © 2001 Universal Studios  
Back cover of Naomi Watts, David Lynch, and Laura Elena Harring; photo by Melissa Moseley © 2001 Universal Studios

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# Naomi Watts Interview

Her stunning work in "Mulholland Drive" has numerous people saying:

## "This is the girl!"

Few actors are challenged with the kind of material Naomi Watts plays in David Lynch's latest film, *Mulholland Drive*. Watts portrays two striking characters who may or may not be the same person. The first is the perky, innocent Betty, who arrives in LA to fulfill her dream. The second is the depressed and worn-out Diane, whose dreams have eluded her. Both characters are extreme in their own ways and require perfect performances—anything less and the film might lose its delicate narrative balance. Fortunately, Watts proves herself superbly able in portraying these vivid and complex personas. Quite simply, her performance in *Mulholland Drive* is brilliant. Watts is getting noticed for her work in the film, and she deserves the accolades. But those who refer to her as a "newcomer" to the film scene are overlooking her already substantial career. Watts has been acting in various film and television productions for the past ten years (her credits include *Tank Girl*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *Dangerous Beauty*, among others). Though none of these roles has tasked her quite the way the material in *Mulholland Drive* has, over the years Watts has shown she has a wide acting range.

When we spoke with Watts we had only just seen *Mulholland Drive* for the first time and had not yet formulated a satisfying (for us) interpretation of the film. At times, therefore, our conversation ventured into the realm of speculation, with Watts and co-editors Miller and Thorne tossing out various ideas about what the film meant. We also discussed the film—and especially the character(s) Watts plays—in ways that may have failed to encompass the complexity of the work. Still, the exchange of ideas is interesting and sheds light on how actors (and critics) tackle challenging material. (Since then Craig and John have arrived at a cogent and, we think, comprehensive interpretation of the movie. See our review and essay beginning on page 8.)

WIP editors Craig Miller and John Thorne spoke with Naomi Watts by phone on October 17. We thank her for taking the time out of a busy promotional schedule to talk with us about David Lynch's fascinating new film. We also thank her publicist, Robin Baum, for co-ordinating the scheduling in very short time. (Thanks also to

Laura Thorne for invaluable, last-minute assistance in facilitating this interview.) The interview was transcribed by John and edited by John and Craig.

**Miller:** Tell us how you got your role in *Mulholland Drive*.

**Watts:** I was in New York having sort of a vacation with my mom and my brother. I got a call that said I had a meeting back in LA. I have this golden rule never to break your plans for an audition, especially when it involves travel, because the odds are ordinarily way up against you, and it's a double disappointment when you go to all that trouble. But then they said it was David Lynch, and that perked my interest. Then I was also told he has quite an irregular casting system—he goes through a pile of photos and picks out four or five and says, "Let's meet with those girls." If you're girl number two—and he falls in love with you—then he doesn't need to meet with the other girls. Instantly the odds were better. I said to my mom, "I'll be back in twenty-four hours. I'm just going to go take this meeting, and it's David Lynch." She fully encouraged it. And off I went.

Johanna Ray was the casting woman. I had done a couple of auditions with her over the years, and I guess she was the one who alerted David about me. So I walk in, and I know nothing about the role except that she's an actress who is coming to LA in pursuit of her dreams. I didn't know where she was from or anything about her background. I didn't know her cultural status—whether she was white trash or sophisticated. I really went in as myself. I wore jeans, t-shirt, no make-up; I literally went straight from the plane. I walked in the room, and it was just Johanna and David. There was no waiting. Normally when you go to those auditions, it's like four or five girls waiting in the room staring at each other wondering if they're the girl. It just wasn't anything like I've experienced in an audition before. I walk in, and David stands up and says, "Hi," and he's got this big grin, and all this warmth and charisma exudes from him. I instantly felt at ease. We just started chatting. There was no looking at my resume and asking about my credits. It was not a work-related conversation at all: it was really just talk-

ing about family and where I'd come from and stuff like that. I felt almost odd talking about things that were so personal. In fact I remember stopping myself at one point—because I felt like I was rambling—and said, "Do you want to hear this?" And he said, "Yeah, I sure do, Naomi! Go ahead!" So I continued, and we were there for probably thirty or forty minutes, and at the end he stood up and said, "Well, it was sure great to meet you, Naomi!" And he gave me this big hug! And I thought, "Wow! This is so interesting."

I felt so good about the whole meeting. I just thought, "Well, if I don't get it, fine. I loved David Lynch's films before, and now I'm just going to love them even more because I'll what a great guy he is!" You know when you love somebody's work, and then you meet them, and they're not the great person that you hoped they'd be, and it colors your whole perception of them from that point forward? Well this [meeting] just made it all better for me, and I couldn't wait to see more of his films.

I was getting ready to go back on the plane that afternoon, and I got a call saying, "Please, would you go and meet with him again tomorrow. But this time would you get a little more dressed up?" So instantly I jumped to the conclusion that he thinks I'm ugly, and that I'm never going to get the role, and they're looking for a super-model. So I started doubting myself and thinking, this is never going to happen. But I thought I'd give it a shot. So the next day I went and got my hair blown out at the hairdressers, and I put on a tight dress and bit of a heel and some make-up. I went to his house this time, and the minute I walked in the door he said, "Oh wow, Naomi, you sure are beautiful!" Instantly, again, I was put at ease, and all the self-doubt went out the window.

Johanna Ray was there with David, and so was another actor, Scott Coffey. I had worked with Scott before on *Tank Girl*. I was pretty shocked to see Scott, because I hadn't seen him in so long. Scott was just getting up to leave, and Dave saw that we knew each other, and he told Scott to sit down and to hang out. So this time it was the four of us. We really just hung out for about a half-hour or so, and he played me the music and talked a little bit about the



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project. At the end, as I was walking out, he gave me a script. I walked out with Scott, who has worked with David a number of times, and he said to me, "Oh my God! He never gives scripts away. You realize you have this now." I was thinking, "Oh please, God! Please, I really want it!" Sure enough, about two weeks later we went into negotiations. And that's how I got the role—the most brilliant role that I've not only ever had but ever dreamed of. This is about as good as it gets, as far I'm concerned.

It was the easiest role to get. There were no obstacles, no hurdles. I was blessed, I think.

**CM:** When you were handed the script at the end of that meeting, was that the first time you learned what the film was going to be about?

**NW:** Actually, no. The first time I had the meeting, I had no clues whatsoever. The second time, I had been able to get hold of a script—secretly and completely unbeknownst to David! Somehow, through a source, I had managed to get hold of a copy, and the second time I went in, I had some insight. Although, of course, I did not let on that I did. [Laughter]

**CM:** You've been getting rave reviews for your work in Mulholland Drive, which makes ABC look especially bad since, according to *Tad Friend's* New Yorker article, the network was unhappy with your performance in the original pilot—

**NW:** I don't know if they were unhappy with the performance. I think they thought that I was too old to play an "Aw-shucks" kind of girl.

**CM:** Did you hear much about their complaints at the time or about Lynch's struggle to keep the show the way he wanted it?

**NW:** Heard little tiny rumors. Perhaps we were protected from

the nasty stuff. But David costs without auditioning, and the regular casting process—especially for network TV—consists of a series of auditions. Then you get to the executives. And then you go the network. It's a really big ordeal, and there are so many people to please. I think it was quite hard for them to give up that creative control. But David was adamant, saying, "This is what is going to happen." In fact, I did find out that he had requested some tape on me, and I guess David got wind of that information and became upset about it—that they were, even for a second, doubting his choice.

**Thorne:** We have some questions about your character in Mulholland Drive. Throughout the first part of the film—what was essentially the pilot—Betty is perky, naive and innocent. In the second part of the film, your character is depressed, desperate and worn-down. Were you surprised at how much she had changed between versions?

**NW:** Let me say first that David doesn't like to talk too much about what was for TV and what was for film. He feels like it diminishes the mystery in it. And I respect that. Most people don't know what was for film and for TV.

I remember seeing that [eighty-eight minute] pilot, and I was devastated. It had nothing to do with the script. He had to cram and drop tons of stuff. He was only given eighty-six minutes or something—there was some problem about how many minutes he had in order to fit the [commercial]. I know he was not happy with it. And it is upsetting, because some people will say, "I saw the movie ages ago!" And I will say, "No, you didn't!" I thought a lot of the Betty character was sabotaged in [that version of] the pilot. The set-up and pay-off was eliminated. There were a whole lot of scenes that were not there. So when we got back to shooting, it was all put back together the right way.

I wasn't shocked or surprised [about the changes]. I definitely felt excited and overwhelmed with joy that this character would get to make such a significant turn. Actors look for places where we can show differences, points of growth, epiphanies—all those kinds of things in the material. It's really up to you to find it and to create those opportunities. But with David's script it was really there on the page, and it was just up to me to make it truthful.

Having said that, you know, when we were shooting the pilot, I knew that this character—and yes, she was perky and peppy and innocent and naive when you put her in the context of a David Lynch world—was going to change.

**JT:** We know that after the pilot was shot, it was rejected by ABC, and only later did Lynch return to add new material. What was it

like for you to be away from the film and then to come back to it again after some time?

**NW:** It was about a year-and-a-half, possibly two. And it was torture, because it felt so unfair that I was in the only David Lynch project that would never see the light of day. It seemed like such a sure thing, and there was so much hope and positivity and promise around the time of shooting. Then when we found out it didn't get picked up, it was really a shock. Then there were all kinds of hypothesizing about what kind of format it would take on. Would it be for another network? Would it be for a cable channel? Would it be a TV movie? Would it air at 4 a.m. in the morning with no promos? So it was one conflicting bit of information to the next. It kept us all invested, because we just couldn't let go. It was really a protracted journey of torture. So when it finally got round to being a feature, it just felt like an enormous sense of relief. And then the excitement started

to build once we were on set again.

It felt completely natural to come back. We'd stayed in touch. Not just me and Dave, but all the actors. We all enjoyed the working experience with him so much the first time around that we were just really excited to be back at the set again.

**CM:** You mentioned the possible dark undercurrent to Betty. Although the end of the film is somewhat of a surprise, there is an earlier scene that might foreshadow a darker Betty—the audition scene with Chad Everett. Talk about the filming of this scene and what kind of direction you were getting from Lynch.

**NW:** There are also a couple of scenes before that one which hint that there are other dimensions to Betty—that she's not just this one-dimensional, happy-go-lucky, anachronistic character who looks like she belongs on the side of a cereal box. It really felt like she was a cardboard cut-out, but then you have the audition scene. But before that she takes on the role of the detective, and you could see that she's a little bit thrill-seeking and prides herself in controlling Rita and the whole situation. When she's taking the money out of the purse, there's a glint in Betty's eye. She's afraid, but she's not running from that fear. In fact she's running towards it. You get that there's something about her that's not all that innocent. Then when you come to the audition scene, she certainly comes out of left field. We learn so much about Betty in that scene, and she learns about herself. She's someone who is wanting for more, wanting for a little bit of a darker life. A thrill-seeking sense is coming alive in her.

When we got together with that group of actors, David was really excited. There was something about the group of us that clicked right from the time we started rehearsing. It was just all jelling. Almost every time [we shot it] we got it right. His excitement brushes off on people. Each time we did a take we went a little bit further, because we could see and feel his joy.

Chad Everett—what an extraordinary character! I don't know if it was his TV training, but there was never a single moment where he was missing a beat. He was just on. I felt completely safe with the way he was working. It was a great group of people who understood each other's styles and methods of working. It just organically came together.

When an actor reads a script, you look to see about the character, and you look for a scene that stops you and makes you want the part. That was the scene. When I was flipping through the script, that was the one that made me go, "Wow! This is the part right here."

**CM:** Your range as an actress came through brilliantly by the end, having to portray two very different aspects of the same person. What were the challenges involved, showing a new side to the character, yet still maintaining an integrity that made her believable to the audience?

"David doesn't like to talk too much about what was for TV and what was for film."



Watts with David Lynch

**NW:** I had to really understand each character. You can see it as two separate characters, but I definitely only saw it as one. One is the reality-based character, and one is the projection, the wish, the dream, the fantasy, or the alter-ego—whatever you want to call it. I was blessed that it was there in the writing, and it was up to me to understand it and make it truthful. The way I looked at it was that Diane was the reality-based character and Betty was the dream. Other people see it completely the opposite.

**JT:** Do you think if Mulholland Drive had continued as a series we would have seen the same similar changes in Betty that we do in the film?

**NW:** I definitely do. Even while we were shooting the pilot and Betty was busy being sweet and excitable and energetic, you just knew that something was "off" about her. It was almost psychotic. Nobody is that naive at that age—I don't care where you come from. Unless you're three-and-a-half, you don't get that excited, and you don't take on experiences in such a fresh, innocent way. Like that scene where she arrives at the airport—it's kind of bizarre! [Laughter]

When I was going through the motions of Betty, I remember playing scenes where I would say something like "Everything is going to be A-okay!" or I would be

busy getting all excited and positive and optimistic. David would call "Cut!" and people would look at me, and I would look at them, and I would say, "Bad Betty!" [Laughter] Because you could just tell that something was going on. Something was in the works.

**JT:** Diane is a tragic character—a seemingly innocent victim of forces beyond her control. Unlike Laura Palmer in *Fire Walk With Me*, she does not appear to have an overt dark side. Her only fault would seem to be ambition and the desire for fame. What did she do that would cause her to deserve such a tragic fate?

**NW:** I think this is a character who has lived in LA, and basically she is a depressive. She comes into contact with something that is going to exacerbate her depression. She wants to believe that it is going to end up as a positive situation, but it doesn't. It's an unrequited love story, and she basically wants to assume Camilla's lifestyle. By being in the same proximity and falling for her, she [thinks] she might be able to grasp that somehow. Camilla's identity is very strong: she's a movie star, she's got people in love with her, she's beautiful—she's everything that Diane is not. Diane is completely in awe of that. She's in a self-loathing, self-destructive stage in her life, but when she comes into contact with Camilla, things change,

and things feel better. When she has that taken away from her, she goes into a deeper and depraved and horrible state. It's a depression that she cannot get out of.

**JT:** She does take action at the end by trying to kill Camilla. In some ways she is responsible for her own downfall.

**NW:** Absolutely. She is self-destructive, and she creates her own fate. Why has that happened to her? To me, it is all to do with the darkness and loss of dreams and identity that one can experience in a city like Los Angeles.

**JT:** Sherry Lee told us that it was difficult to watch herself in *Fire Walk With Me* because of the anguish and pain her character experienced. Did you find it hard to watch the final part of Mulholland Drive?

**NW:** No, not really. Sometimes I find it hard to watch Betty! I find her annoying sometimes. [Laughter] But I also like that, too, because I feel it is an emotional reaction, and it is probably a good one. As long as you're emoting something, it's real and truthful. So, to me, I find I just want to slap Betty!

**JT:** How did you prepare for some of the intense scenes in Mulholland Drive, especially those that occur at the end?

**NW:** I use music. I would sit with my headphones on right up until we started shooting, depending on the scene. Particularly, I was using *Flores Apple* because

her lyrics have a lot of anger and anguish and tragedy and unrequited love. It is very young, female-oriented stuff. There was also a great article a few years back in *The New Yorker* on depression, and I read that. I think anybody can get in touch with a form of depression—I'm sure everyone has experienced that to a degree—but this described the sort of depression where you don't get out of bed for days at a time, or shower, or eat. So literature helped me with that.

But really the best from of preparation with David is imagination and to be in touch with intuition and trust. Whatever you'd prepare, you'd do that privately. But conversations with David in creating the character didn't rely heavily on any method or preparation or backstory. It's more to do with isolating the scene at hand. He really doesn't divulge too much, and it's up to you to interpret it. He certainly doesn't instruct anything too specific. In fact, he lets you run free. He works very much from his intuition, and I do too, so there was something about the two of us using that technique that worked rather well.

**JT:** I think I already know the answer to this question, but I would be remiss if I didn't ask. Given the unique nature of Mulholland Drive, did Lynch provide any general idea of what the new film was about, or how the themes might have changed from its original conception as a TV series to its final version as a feature film?

**NW:** Not at all. Not at all. It was really a case of him handing us the pages. And I learned, in the process of filming the pilot, to stop asking questions, because ultimately he was just going to answer it with another question that would open up another can of worms. At first I thought it was torture, and that he was delighting in my torture, but soon

I started to understand what he was playing at, and I started to trust him. The key, really, to being able to deliver was to trust David.

When I started doing press [for the film] people started asking me about the method in which we worked as an actor and a director. To me, he was like a hoarse whisperer. He creates a language that suits the actor—like a horse and the whisperer—that nobody else is in on. He would just come up and talk to me in a really gentle way. It was almost like everything else—and everybody else—disappeared. You are just in this world together, and it is a very intimate experience. I can't even remember what it was that he said to me. All I know is that it was pretty simple and not much. Then he would walk away and call, "Action!" and for anybody to understand what he said to me was [to see] me performing or delivering.

**CM:** One of the themes of Mulholland Drive is the artificiality of Hollywood. Did your arrival by way of England and Australia make it easier or harder to relate to this theme?

**NW:** I definitely have seen some pretty extreme and dark—as well as incredibly great—stuff go on in Hollywood. I think David is tapping into some stuff and making it a bit of a satire, all with his tongue in his cheek. There are some things that he makes beautiful as well. But then you see the dark side. That's what I love about David—he's always exploring the balance of mixed emotions in his characters and his films. That's apparent in the depiction of Hollywood in this film.

I have seen some of that stuff go on. Maybe not to that extreme—like somebody bashing out the windshield of a studio exec's limo [laughter]. I'm sure that David has never experienced anything like that, but I'm sure that it relates to some kind of truth he might have experienced with people trying to control or stifle his creativity.

**JT:** Like many of Lynch's films, the story in Mulholland Drive is challenging, even confusing. There are many different ways to read the movie. Do you have any specific interpretation of what



Watts with Laura Elena Harring

happened in the film, and are you interested in how other people respond to Mulholland Drive?

**NW:** I'm really interested in what other people think, and I definitely have my own interpretation. Sometimes it surprises me how many different interpretations there

are. At first, I was quite married to the way I had decided it worked for me, and then I saw the film [again], and I remained married to it. Then, when I saw it a third time, I thought, "Wow, I really understand this now. I want to look for more. I want to see what else is going on." I felt really sure of myself and that I could get more within the same interpretation. And then I saw other elements going on, and I almost confused myself. So I sort of stayed married to the original interpretation. But when I talk to friends or other people who have seen it, they speculate and get passionate about their interpretations, and I can completely relate to that as well. I can see other ways for it to be completely truthful and coherent. I think that's the beauty of this film. I think that is David's endeavor. The film does live on, and people are going to talk and think about it and hopefully go back to see it again. That's the beauty of not tying

it all up and making it so linear.

People sometimes feel stupid if they are not able to grasp onto something, but David tries to encourage people to trust their instincts, because people can say, "I loved it, but I don't know what it was about or what it means. But I really enjoyed it." To me, and to David, I know that that is enough. In his mind you have an experience, and it was probably an emotional one if you are able to say, "I loved it"—and so the truth is within you in some special way.

**JT:** Just to clarify: Your interpretation is one in which Betty is the fantasy character, correct?

**NW:** Basically I see Diane as this failed actress in an unrequited love story. Camilla represents everything she wants. Because the love is not being reciprocated, she starts planning the worst. When it's done, things go into a horrible place. Before the end [there is] a stream of consciousness—

her wish of how it could have been. There is Betty, who knows who she is. And there is Rita, who has no sense of identity. Betty is in control. Almost everyone likes to have some kind of power—a kid will dress her a doll and give her a name. That's what Betty was in

dream with Rita—she was able to tell Rita who she was and manipulate her in different ways. So that's how I saw the story.

But then, also, people have asked me, "Was it the dream of the guy at the diner?" You know, the guy at Winkie's speaking to his therapist. Was that the one truthful scene in the movie, and was the rest dream? One of the things I learned doing a project a long time ago is that there is this whole research about dreams called Gestalt that says you are everyone in your dream. Not only every character but every texture—like the fabric in your dress [or] every leg of the table; everything you design or create in your dream is another version of yourself. So that was something that helped me.

I think [David] uses symbols quite a lot, too, like the key and the blue box. Even the road, Mulholland Drive, and what it represents—all the twists and turns and the beauty versus darkness.

**JT:** It is interesting that the last three Lynch films are all connected with roads or driving—Lost Highway, The Straight Story, and now Mulholland Drive.

**NW:** Yeah, I think it must represent a journey of some kind to David. What did you think of the blue box?

**CM:** The thing that came to my mind was the blue rose in *Fire Walk With Me* in which a "blue rose case" was a mysterious case leading to a possible supernatural event or linked to another world. That's the extent that I've gone so far.





**NW:** And then you have the Blue Lady at then end.

To me, [the box] represented the mind, and, as crazy as it may seem, Pandora's box. If you open the box, out comes the darkness. If we could just get it shut again the mind would be silent.

**JT:** The interesting thing about the way Lynch shot that, however, is that when she opens the box, it's almost as if she falls into it. Nothing comes out.

**NW:** Yeah, I saw it as a rushing in.

It's funny about his thing with "blue" isn't it? David is definitely someone who [revisits] ideas and moods and themes. But they've always evolved in some different way. Goddard says, "All great filmmakers make the same film." David is making new films, but they are coming from the same emotional place.

**JT:** I think there's an evolution, too. We see cut characters in his earlier films, whether it's Frank in *Blue Velvet* or Bob in *Twin Peaks*. But in this film there is no character we can point to and say, "That's the bad guy." He may have moved past that and is now looking at "us" in a more complicated way.

**NW:** I think he's exploring things in a way where not all the "badness" and "goodness" are going into separate individuals. He's created a thing where there is both good and bad in Betty—or Diane, or what-

ever you want to call her. And the same goes for Camilla and Rita. In the same human being there are these extreme emotions which are fighting each other. I think that it is an evolved version of the same thing we've seen from David, because no one is that black or white. I think he's illustrating the emotions that exist in all of us.

**CM:** What was it like to attend the Mulholland Drive premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, particularly in light of the film's early problems with ABC?

**NW:** It was your perfect bittersweet story, mostly sweet. It was the wonderful payoff for all the disappointment we went through. It was really a magical way to have it end. Cannes was surreal. It was this intense experience. Everybody had told me about how it would be, and it was that to the power of ten. David is such a huge star—he is like a demi-god over there. So there was a lot of attention, and it really was a positive reception.

**CM:** Your press kit mentions that your short film, *Elle Parker*, was being developed into a feature. Can you tell us more about that?

**NW:** It is still being developed. I made a short film with Scott Coffey, who has become one of my best friends. We did this short film that was shot digitally. It's about an actress in LA and is very reality-based. There is no resemblance to *Mulholland Drive*, however. It is a tiny bit autobio-

graphical in regards to my own and Scott's experiences. It is both comical and disturbing at the same time. We entered it into the Sundance Film Festival, and we got into the competition, and we have been in a number of other short-film festivals. And in one—*The Method Fest*—I won best actress. Because we had such a great reaction, and because we had such a great time making it, we carried on with the character and made a bunch more. You can win with digital—you need a one-man crew and zero dollars. We got actor friends to help us out whenever we could. We've made three more, and Scott has written a script, and we're in the process of trying to find financing. The story has evolved quite a lot. It's really not just about acting.

**CM:** What else are you working on?

**NW:** Right now I'm working on a film called *Plots With a View*. It's a black comedy from Miramax. It's with Brenda Blethyn, Christopher Walken, and Alfred Molina. It is set in Wales, and I play a "Welsh town tart." [Laughter] It is really quite a funny character, and I'm having a lot of fun with it.

**CM:** Do you find most of your work in LA?

**NW:** I'm back-and-forth from LA to the UK—and to Australia.

**CM:** Thanks for taking the time to talk with us.

**NW:** Thank you, and good luck to you guys.



# Mulholland Drives Us Wild!

## PART 1: THE REVIEW

David Lynch's new film *Mulholland Drive* is a dazzling work and one of the director's best movies—perhaps even his very best. The visual flair and integration of images and music is as good as ever, and it includes many of his favorite themes and motifs, such as duality and dreams. What sets this new film apart is a thematic complexity that is sometimes missing in Lynch's work. This may be the director's most layered, multi-faceted work.

The basic story is—well, even the basic story is complex and convoluted (like the road itself for which the film is named). Briefly, there are (at first, anyway) two primary stories that are intertwined, though the viewer won't see the connections until well into the film.

The first story involves a woman who barely escapes being killed in a car accident (on Mulholland Drive). Suffering from amnesia, she can't even remember her name. Seeing a poster for the 1946 movie *Gilda* starring Rita Hayworth, she appropriates the name and calls herself Rita. She ends up hiding out in an apartment that will soon be occupied by Betty Elms. Betty is from a small town in Canada and visiting Los Angeles while trying to break into movies as an actress. She's staying at her aunt's apartment while the aunt is off filming a movie. Betty takes it upon herself to help Rita discover who she is—and perhaps in the process explain how a huge amount of cash and a mysterious blue key have ended up in Rita's purse.

In a second story, young director Adam Kesher finds his life suddenly falling apart. Studio executives are forcing him to cast a particular lead actress in his next film. When he balks, he's threatened with being fired. Deciding to go home, he finds his wife in bed with another man. After a strange late-night meeting, he must decide what direction to take with his career and his life.

Then there are the minor sideroads—or at least they seem like minor sideroads for a while—of a man at Winkie's (a Denny's-like restaurant) telling a friend about his dreams and a frightful man who lives be-

hind the restaurant; and a hitman whose simple assignment ends up beset with complications.

Eventually all of these threads come together about halfway into the film. Actually, they appear to come together, but those connections turn out to be an incomplete story. In the last third of the film, Lynch shows a deeper understanding, a deeper reality, to how all those apparently disparate strands weave together, and it is here that he is in top form. While he has always been interested in exploring deeper truths underneath surface appearances, *Mulholland* presents those observations with both a complexity and a purity of vision that is stunning.

If it sounds like we're being vague here, it's intentionally so: there are surprises in the film that we do not want to

the structure and plot of the film are the ideas of illusion versus reality, optimistic fantasies versus lost dreams, and personal identity. While these are not new topics for Lynch, what makes *Mulholland Drive* so powerful is that he ties these themes to the real world of filmmaking in Hollywood, the land where dreams come true, but also where dreams are shattered.

Even Lynch's best work often lacked this metaphorical element—his worlds at times became so insular that it was hard to see real-world connections. Of course, this insularity added to the power of the films: Lynch has an uncanny ability to draw a viewer into the filmmaker's unique vision, his own unique world. But often these films were so far removed from reality that they didn't have much to say about real life, except perhaps as a kind of psychological abstraction. (Part of what makes *FWHM* so powerful is its harrowing depiction—in both a real and metaphorical way—of sexual abuse.)

With *Mulholland Drive*, Lynch retains the power of his images and moody atmospherics, but incorporates them into an examination of life in Hollywood. The power of illusion is utilized and at the same time demystified: a magician performs on stage and says, "This is all a tape recording...It is an illusion." Lynch is utilizing film to examine the process of filmmaking, drawing us into a world while commenting on the process itself.

The exploration of filmmaking, and the relationship between the audience, the filmmaker, and the actor, is further explored through the characters of Adam, the film director, and Betty, the naïve newcomer to the city. Betty has embraced an idealized image of Hollywood—she is clearly in awe at being in "this dream place" and throws herself wholeheartedly into an audition (even when practicing her scene beforehand with Rita). Earlier in the movie, when placing an anonymous phone call to police inquiring about a possible automobile accident on Mulholland Drive, she tries to calm an apprehensive Rita by telling her, "I'll be just like in the movies. We'll pretend to be someone else." Sure enough, later, during her audition, Betty virtually does become someone else. The layers of reality here are fascinating: the



reveal in this review (though we will discuss them in part 2, "The Essay," that follows this first part), but it's difficult to discuss the themes too specifically without at least hinting at some of those surprises. We will say that, perfectly integrated into



Betty (Naomi Watts) and Rita (Laura Elena Harring)

viewer watches a movie in which Lynch is directing actress Naomi Watts play another actress, Betty, performing for another director, and in the process Betty herself virtually achieves a new identity. (We're actually leaving out at least one additional level that would give too much away here.) Perhaps only Ken Finkleman's (*Married Life*, *The Newsroom*, etc.) work has achieved an equal level of complexity about the nature of pretending to be someone else within the context of acting. Betty practically loses herself in her "roles" (the director actually tells her before the audition, "Don't play it for real until it gets real"), while her new friend Rita must fight off amnesia and discover her old identity or simply create a new one from scratch. It turns out that, in the process of searching for her identity, Rita is creating a new identity for herself anyway—after all, she has to be someone while finding out who

she was/is.

*Mulholland Drive* contains some of Lynch's most interesting characters to date. Perhaps more than ever, the characters that populate this film seem real and allow the audience to relate to them, which increases the power of the film. Let's face it, Dale Cooper and the Log Lady are fantastic characters, but it's difficult to believe in them as real, living, breathing individuals. They are simply working on a different plane of existence from the rest of us. But in *Mulholland*, Lynch has characters that are rich, complex, and believable—more than a collection of idiosyncrasies. It is easy to relate to them and their struggles, because those struggles are our struggles.

The performances in *Mulholland Drive* are uniformly magnificent and career-defining—yet we should not be surprised. Lynch is somehow able to get performances out of actors that they are never able to

repeat. Sheryl Lee's best performance by far is in *Fire Walk With Me*. The only time Kyle MacLachlan was able to come close to his work as Dale Cooper was in the (unfortunately little-known) film *The Trial*. (For that matter, *Twins Peaks* represents the best career work of most of the participants involved.) *Lost Highway* helped redefine the type of work Bill Pullman and Robert Blake were capable of. And so on.

The true breakout in *Mulholland Drive* is Naomi Watts. The final third of the film rivals Lee's *FWWM* performance as perhaps the best work ever in any Lynch film. We can't explain *why* here without giving too much of the plot away, but Watts should be considered near the top echelon of actresses, based on what we've seen. While producers did not seem to respond to Lee's *FWWM* work with offers of prime material, let's hope that Watts is more fortunate. (At least one magazine, *Enter-*

tainment Weekly, has already mentioned Watts as a possible Oscar nominee for best actress.)

While having less screen time than Watts, Justin Theroux and Laura Elena Harring contribute sizzling performances. Harring's is especially haunting—she must portray a woman with essentially a blank mind, yet with an undercurrent of fear. Something from Rita's past has her terrified—perhaps she was in trouble of some kind—but she cannot remember what, keeping her in a constant state of edginess. Theroux has the challenging task of humanizing a temperamental director who, in the hands of a less talented actor, could have alienated viewers as a spoiled jerk. But there are some moments late in the film in which it is important that viewers not dislike Adam, and Theroux is able to keep this from happening with an easygoing personality that had us amused by Adam, even when we knew we should have been annoyed by some of his antics.

The film is also a showcase for Angelo Badalamenti, who not only has a great cameo appearance as a Mafia-like movie executive, but provides a soundtrack that is astounding and easily one of his best ever. (Though the Academy Awards unfairly overlooked his work on *The Straight Story*, he absolutely should receive acclaim for *Mulholland*.) Several pieces are breathlessly beautiful—"Mulholland

Drive," "Betty's Theme," "Diane and Camilla," and "Love Theme"—and so perfectly complete the images on screen that it's impossible to think of those scenes without the music (and vice versa, for that matter). Alongside the Badalamenti tunes are a few David Lynch/John Neff songs (Neff worked with Lynch on the Jocelyn Montgomery CD *Lux Vixens*; see *WTP* 37 and 40), and two, "Pretty 50s" and "Mountains Falling," are the equal of Badalamenti's best work. Add to this Mill Buckner's "The Best," Sonny Boy Williamson's "Bring It On Home," Linda Scott's "I've Told Every Little Star," and Rebekah Del Rio's showstopping "Llorando (Crying)," and *Mulholland Drive* becomes one of the best soundtracks in years and compares favorably with the acclaimed *Twin Peaks* and *Fire Walk With Me* CDs.

Many viewers are probably aware of the long, convoluted story of how *Mulholland* came to the screen, starting out as a pilot for ABC television (planned for the fall of 1999), not being picked up, sitting on the shelf for a year, then reworked as a feature film. The degree to which this knowledge influences viewers' appreciation and interpretation of the film is impossible to know, though it's hard not to block it from one's mind, even if Lynch would almost certainly prefer that the audience not begin to analyze which pieces of film belong to which aspects of the project.

(Next issue, we will look further into the history of *Mulholland Drive*.)

In any event, *Wrapped in Plastic* 34 contains our argument that *Fire Walk With Me* was Lynch's best film because it "finds a perfect balance between Lynch's thematic depth, interesting characters, and an exciting story. *Blue Velvet* attains the latter but—particularly in light of *FWWM* and *Lost Highway*—is a movie that just scratches the surface of Lynch's themes of duality and secrets. *Lost Highway* is probably Lynch's most challenging thematic exercise, but its confusing—almost gimmicky—plot convulsions and convolutions lead only to confusion."<sup>1</sup>

*Mulholland Drive*, it turns out, has the same elements that make *Fire Walk With Me* such a great movie: thematic depth, interesting characters, and an exciting story. While we're not quite ready just yet to drop *FWWM* to second place in the Lynch pantheon, it now has a serious challenger. *Mulholland Drive* might be Lynch's most complex, mature, insightful work to date, with the audience receiving rewards during each additional viewing. When all is said and done, it may stand alone as Lynch's best movie.

<sup>1</sup>Craig Miller and John Thorne, "Twin Peaks: *Fire Walk With Me* is David Lynch's Greatest Film," *Wrapped in Plastic* 34 (April 1998), p. 13.



Coco (Jurn Miller) and Betty

## PART 2: THE ESSAY

[Warning: Spoilers abound!] Mulholland Drive contains many surprises, and they are discussed below. Readers who have not seen the film and don't want to know about these plot twists should wait until later to read this essay!

### I. INTRODUCTION

Before we discuss *Mulholland Drive* in depth, we should first describe the plot in more detail than we wanted to in Part 1. The film breaks down into two sections. In the first, Betty comes to Hollywood to pursue an acting career. She is a bit with casting agents and almost gets a chance to meet Adam Kesher, director of a film that has top actresses vying for the lead (but who is being strangled into casting an unknown, Camilla Rhodes, for the part). Meanwhile, amnesia victim Rita barely escapes being killed (first by gangsters, then by a car crash) and ends up meeting Betty, who decides to help Rita discover who she is. After encountering a frightening, partially decomposed corpse in the apartment of someone named Diane Seywyn, Rita decides she must alter her identity. With Betty's assistance, Rita is remade to look like—Betty! Soon, after a trip to a strange midnight theater called Club Silencio, Betty suddenly disappears, leaving only Rita.

In the second section of the film, the Betty/Rita story turns out to be Diane Seywyn's dream. Seywyn is a failed actress who is consumed with anger, jealousy, and bitterness toward former friend and lover Camilla, and these eat away at her mental stability. At first glance the audience might conclude that Betty is a stand-in for Diane, while Rita represents Camilla (and Diane's anger toward her), although this explanation turns out to be superficial (as we will explain shortly). In any event, Diane ends up hiring a hitman to kill Camilla, and apparently he is successful. Alone and in despair, Diane kills herself.

This latter third of the film forces the audience to reinterpret the entire first two-thirds. What appeared to be a straightforward story about aspiring actress Betty, amnesia victim Rita, and hotshot director Adam turns into a metaphor for something else entirely. *Mulholland Drive* ends up being a chilling psychological tale of one naive woman's descent into madness because of her disillusionment with how her life has gone.

Through this, Lynch examines some of his favorite themes—duality, identity, heartbreak, dreams—but in this new film he emphasizes something else: the illusive nature of the world. This has always been implied in his work but rarely addressed directly. And Lynch chooses the perfect setting for such exploration: Hollywood itself. *Mulholland Drive* establishes a complex relationship between Los Angeles, "the City of Dreams," and the identity of one individual who came to that city full of optimistic dreams, but would end up living in a terrible nightmare.

*Mulholland Drive* is a fascinating

puzzle, and most scenes are packed with observations about several of those aforementioned themes. This multi-faceted complexity makes the film both a joy and a frustration to analyze, as almost any given event can be seen from several different viewpoints. As such, there is no way that we can address all of those views and the interpretations that arise. What follows is our analysis of two major themes of the movie, identity and illusion (that is, illusion versus reality). As presented in *Mulholland Drive*, these themes are virtually inseparable. However, we have tried our best to discuss them individually. Our hope is that, by the end of the essay, the reader will get a glimpse of how these two are presented, and ultimately intertwined, in Lynch's film.

### II. IDENTITY

#### Two Halves Becoming One

While Twin Peaks explored the duality within people, it was not until *Lost Highway* that Lynch sought to delve into issues of identity in a more complex manner. (In fact, after *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, the explorations of the issue in Peaks look a bit simplistic.) Though perhaps needlessly inscrutable, *Lost Highway* set up parallel stories in which Fred and Renee Madison were later echoed in Pete Dayton and Alice Wakefield. The complexity came when, without explanation, Fred seemingly transformed into Pete midway into the film, then later transformed back. In addition, the same actress (Patricia Arquette) played both the Renee and Alice roles, and according to Chris Rodley,<sup>3</sup> Lynch told Arquette that they were both the same woman. Various theories were proposed as to what all this meant (see WIP 28 and 29), the prime candidates being (1) that the Pete Dayton world was a mental state created by Fred to escape the reality of his being locked in prison for the murder of his wife; and (2) that both Fred's and Pete's worlds were equally real, with the Mystery Man as a kind of behind-the-scenes manipulator (à la the man in the Planet in *Eroshead*).

Interestingly, *Mulholland Drive* contains elements of both of these, but in a more straightforward (and understandable) fashion than *Lost Highway*. Both films, however, end up with the same grim results: the lead characters are mad or suicidal. We don't know whether Lynch is making some overall statement about identity, but two of his last three films (excluding *The Straight Story*, which Lynch did not write) have lead characters on the brink of insanity (or probably well past)

### CAST LIST

(in order of appearance)

Betty Elms	Irma's Companion	Rita	Lana Driver	Det. McNight	Det. Dorngard	Ann Smith	Dan	Herb	Dum	Mr. Roque	Roque's Minstrel	Back of Head Man	Harry-Armed Man	Club Driver at LAX	Coco	Luzig Castiglione	Vincentio Castiglione	Adam Kesher	Robert Smith	Ray Holt	Mr. Darby	Espresso Man	Camilla Rhodes	Castiglione Limo Driver	Joe	Ed	Henry-Set Woman	Vacuum Man	Laney	Billy	Lorraine	Gene	Talka	Waldress at Window's	Kenny	Vallet Attendant	Hotel Manager	Cynthia	Louise Bonner	Conway	Martha Johnson	Wally Brown	Jimmy Katz	Bob Booker	Lenny Jones	Nicki	1st AG	2nd Asst. Director	Carol	Backup Singer #1	Backup Singer #2	Backup Singer #3	Backup Singer #4	Hank (Joni, Dir.)	Jason	Woman in #12	The Magician	Trumpet Player	Blue-Haired Lady	Emilee	Herself	Blond in Bed	Diane Seywyn	Camilla Rhodes	Wilkins	Director	Written by	Produced by	Director of Photography	Production Designer	Art Director	Costume Designer	Editor	Music by	Creating by	Executive Producer	NAOMI WATTS	JANNE BATES	DAN BRINKAUM	LAURA ELENA HARRING	SCOTT WULF	ROBERT FORSTER	BRENT BRIDGE	MAYA BOND	PATRICK HUGHES	MICHAEL COOKE	BONNIE AARONS	MICHAEL J. ANDERSON	JOSEPH KEARNEY	ENRIQUE RUELA	RICHARD MEAN	SEAN E. MCKELAND	ANN MILLER	ANGELO BADALAMENTI	DAN HEDAYA	JUSTIN THEROU	DAVID SCHROEDER	ROBERT RAYMS	MARCUS GRAHAM	TOM MORRIS	MELISSA GEORGE	MATT GALLINI	MARK PELLEGRINO	VINCENT CASTELLANOS	DIANE NELSON	CHARLIE CROUSHWELL	RENA RIFFEL	MICHAEL DES BARRIS	LOU HEUBING	BILLY RAY CYRUS	TAD MORRIS	MELISSA CRIDER	TONY LONGO	DANIEL REY	GEMO SILVA	KATHERINE TOWNE	LEE KRANTZ	JOHNNY MONTGOMERY	KATE FORSTER	JAMES KAREN	CHAD EVERETT	WAYNE GRACE	MTA TAGGART	MICHAEL HICKS	USA PERGUSON	WILLIAM STRANDER	ELIZABETH LACKNEY	BRIAN BEACOCK	BLAKE LINDSEY	JOHNNY CURRY	TYRAN M. LINDSEY	MICHAEL WEATHERED	MICHAEL FAIRMAN	JOHANNA STEIN	RICARD GREEN	CONTI CONDOLO	COIT GLAZER	GEMO SILVA	KEBERAH DEL RIO	LYSSIE POWELL	NAOMI WATTS	LAURA ELENA HARRING	SCOTT COFFEY	DAVID LYNCH	DAVID LYNCH	MARY SWENEY	ALAIN SARDE	NEAL EDELSTEIN	MICHAEL POLAIRE	TONY KRANTZ	PETER OWING	JACK PISK	PETER JAMISON	AMY STOPSKY	MARY SWENEY	ANGELO BADALAMENTI	JOHANN RAZZ	PIERRE EDLMAN
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<sup>3</sup>Chris Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 231.

who have constructed for themselves alternate identities to escape their own disillusionment and grim realities.

Fred Madison is distressed at his crumbling marriage and possible cheating wife. He escapes into the identity of Pete (according to one of the above theories noted), who has Alice, in addition to Pete's girlfriend, lust after him. But the fantasy breaks down, as eventually even Alice betrays him. Fred is caught in an eternal loop of torment, unable to escape. In *Mulholland Drive*, Diane Seywyn moved to Hollywood from a small town in Ontario with the hopes of becoming an actress. She falls in love with Camilla, an actress who later leaves her for a hot, young director. Unable to deal with the rejection, Diane hires a hitman to kill Camilla. She has a dream that could be interpreted as an idealized version of her life in which she

reflection of the love between Diane and Camilla. In real life Diane was jealous of Camilla and wanted to become like her, but in the dream world the Camilla-ish Rita would become like Betty (i.e. Diane).

This interpretation works up to a point, but there is much more going on, made clear by the latter part of the dream. After a frightening encounter with a corpse in Diane Seywyn's bed, Rita decides that she must alter her identity, possibly believing that she will be the next target. However, Betty insists on doing the makeover herself. What she ends up doing is making Rita look almost exactly like Betty. It's as if the two characters are merging into one, and that Rita's new identity (or true identity?) is to be found in Betty.

In light of the end of the film—and consistent with Lynch's other work—it's likely that Betty and Rita are actually two halves, two aspects, of Diane. Betty—naïve, cheerful, and optimistic—is the "light half" (complete with blonde hair!), while (brunette-haired) Rita—mysterious, frightened, and dangerous—is the "dark half." Just as Lynch was experimenting with a similar idea in the final episode of *Three Peaks* by dividing Cooper (see WTP 538), here he is able to explore the concept much more fully. Betty is the talented newcomer taking Hollywood by storm—the representation of what Diane wanted to be. Rita has the mysterious past of probable danger, complete with a bag full of money whose origins are unclear. In the same way that it is important for Pete Dayton (in *Lost Highway*) to have some memory loss about "that night" (the night Fred "created" Pete)

money represents a gift from Diane's aunt, which Diane lived on while trying to establish herself in Hollywood and, more importantly, probably the money she used to hire the hitman. It is significant that it was not money she earned, but (essentially) stumbled upon when her aunt died. In order for Diane's dream to maintain itself, these real-life connections must be kept vague, or the fantasy will begin to fall apart. (Remember the scene in *Lost Highway* when Pete is annoyed by some jazz music playing on the radio—music performed by saxophonist Fred Madison.)

Diane's mental deterioration results in an identity crisis that is exhibited in her dream with events that don't seem to mean much at first, but in retrospect show Lynch's careful control of dialogue. Several scenes come to mind immediately. For instance, when Betty and Rita call Diane's phone number, the dialogue is especially interesting:

Betty: It's strange to be calling yourself.

Rita: Maybe it's not me.

Answering machine: Hello, it's me. Leave a message.

Rita: That's not my voice, but I know her.

Betty: Maybe the voice isn't Diane Seywyn. Maybe that's your roommate, or if it is Diane Seywyn she can tell you who you are.

Rita: Maybe.

Later, in the real-life section, Camilla calls, but Diane does not pick up immediately. The answering machine repeats the message heard earlier in the movie, establishing that in the dream Betty is in essence calling herself while trying to discover Rita's identity. Diane has virtually lost her identity, and her dream presents two aspects of herself, Betty and Rita, calling Diane in what is ultimately an attempt at self-identification. There's an interesting play on words when Rita's line, "Maybe it's not me," is immediately followed by, "Hello, it's me," suggesting once again that Rita is an aspect of Diane.<sup>3</sup>

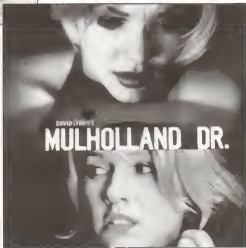
Ironically, all of this follows Betty and Rita's trip to the pay phone at Winkie's. Betty attempts to get information from the police about Rita's car accident, and the

It's also notable that Betty says, "Maybe that's your roommate," suggesting a connection even here between Rita (i.e. Camilla) and Diane. It's also possible Diane and Camilla lived together at some point.



is Betty Elms, a talented new arrival in Hollywood. Meanwhile, amnesia victim Rita (played by the same actress who plays Camilla) needs Betty's assistance to learn her identity. But eventually, as in *Lost Highway*, all roads lead back to the original crime (murder of a wife in one; murder of an ex-lover in the other), and Diane is unable to keep the fantasy going. She wakes up and learns that the hit on Camilla was successful. Unable to handle the guilt, despair, and loneliness, she shoots herself.

The character of Rita is fascinatingly complex. Because she looks like Camilla, it's reasonable to assume that the dream reinterprets the glamorous actress (whom Diane depended upon for getting some roles) as a blank slate who is dependent upon Betty (i.e. Diane) for critical help. What's more, the love between Betty and Rita is a



Highway and Mulholland: similar themes of fractured identity?

in order for the illusion to be maintained, Rita must have a similar memory loss. The

It's also possible Diane and Camilla lived together at some point.



phone call is going well until Sgt. Baxter asks, "May I have your name, please?" Betty immediately hangs up. Ostensibly this is because she has promised Rita that she will be calling anonymously and does not want to get involved in a police investigation, but within the context of the end of the film, Betty must not reveal herself to the police because of the investigation into Camilla's murder. (Earlier in the film, Betty is talking to her aunt about Rita and says, "I don't think we have to do that.... Aunt Ruth, we don't need the police.")

When Coco, the landlady, drops by unexpectedly to see Betty, she sees Rita sitting on the couch and says, "Hi there. Who are you?" Rita is frightened and can't think of what to say. She mumbles, "Uh, Betty?" This seemingly casual answer establishes that Rita doesn't know who she is and may be dependent upon Betty to provide her an identity. Of course, the irony is that Betty ends up turning Rita into a Betty look-alike. And, in light of the end of the film, that's entirely appropriate, since Rita and Betty may very well be two aspects of Diane. But that also puts an interesting spin on Rita's response to Coco: when asked who she is, Rita responds, "Uh, Betty?" as if she's wondering herself that perhaps she's actually Betty.

Another intriguing scene is Betty's encounter with Louise Bonner, a mysterious tenant who lives at the same apartment complex as Aunt Ruth:

*Louise:* Someone is in trouble. Who are you? What are you doing in Ruth's apartment?

*Betty:* My name's Betty.

*Louise:* No, it's not. That's not what she said.

This is followed by a stunning quick zoom into Rita's face: she is terrified. It appears to be more than just a fear of being discovered by Coco; something has gripped her very being. Whatever it is, there's something odd about Louise's denial of Betty's name. As filmed, it's almost as if she's not responding to Betty's statement, although there's nothing else she could be responding to. She practically seems to be carrying on a monologue that is occasionally interrupted by Betty's answers to her questions. If Mulford Drive had been picked up as a series, it's likely that Louise Bonner would have been a kind of Log Lady character, able to see beyond the normal ways of seeing things and providing special insights into events and people.

Whatever the case, the dream suggests that Diane is suffering a major identity crisis. She hates her own life and is jealous of Camilla. She wants what Camilla has; she wants to be Camilla. Near the end of the dream, just after Betty renames Rita to look like herself, Betty invites Rita into bed with her. Betty says, "I'm in love with you." After the women have slept for a short while, Rita begins mumbling as if talking in her sleep, and wakes up Betty.

Lynch frames the shot interestingly: Rita is in the foreground, lying on her back. Betty is behind her, on her side. The positioning of the individuals is such that the silhouette of Rita's face bisects Betty's, so that the two form one complete face. Diane's two sides are merging into a single person. Rita finds her identity in Betty, and after a trip to Club Silencio, Betty suddenly disappears.

Because the two aspects of Diane have merged, there is no need for both characters in the dream. In fact, as the merge occurs, the dream itself ends. The fantasy, the attempt to separate Diane's evil half, cannot succeed, just as, in *Lost Highway*, Fred could not escape indefinitely into Pete's world. Diane must understand that she is comprised of, and capable of, both light and dark, good and evil, naïveté and deep mystery. She cannot flee from or ignore the darker parts of herself—her failures, her hatred, her jealousy.

#### *Diane's Passivity*

The process of Betty and Rita "falling into" one another, of becoming a single entity, reflects a passivity that is echoed in Diane's life. Her disillusionment with her acting career is partly caused by her false expectations—that things would simply fall her way (in Adam's words at the dinner party, "Sometimes good things happen"; note the passive sentence structure). When things didn't work out the way Diane ex-

pected, she did not have the aggressive instincts to take hold of her situation and do the work that needed to be done in order to realize her dreams.

She ended up in Hollywood because of two fortunate circumstances. First, she won a jitterbug contest in Deep River, Ontario. While this obviously required some work, dedication, and proficiency on her part, it had nothing to do with the craft of acting, which even Diane seems to realize. She tells Coco at the dinner party, "That sort of led to acting. You know, wanting to act." It might also be apropos that Lynch chooses for Diane something that has little relation to acting. If Diane had won, say, a debating contest, it would at least prove some speaking proficiency; or a modeling contest, which would establish composure on stage and the ability to look good. But what could possibly carry over into acting from a jitterbug contest?

Diane's second fortunate circumstance in aiding her arrival to Hollywood was when she received some money from an aunt. As Diane explains to Coco, "When my aunt died—anyway, she left me some money. She worked here [in the movies]." This money allowed Diane to establish herself in the city while she looked for acting jobs. It's interesting, however, that Diane did not have to work for the money from her aunt; she only had to outlive her relative, and the money would fall into her lap. But Diane's comment to Coco hints at something else that may be just as important as the money itself. Diane notes that her aunt worked in the movies. Not only, then, did Diane expect to have an advantage by being given some money on which she could live for a while, but she must have expected doors to open magically for her because of her connections. Often, of course, this does, indeed, happen in Hollywood (and everywhere else in the business world), but not always. And obviously Diane wasn't expecting the alternative: she had no back-up plan for endurance when the doors didn't automatically open. In fact, there's no indication as to exactly what kind of work the aunt did in Hollywood. Audiences probably assume she was an actress because of the dream sequence in which Betty states that Aunt Ruth was shooting a film in Canada. But this, remember, is an idealization of Diane's real-life situation. Based on Coco's response, it's quite possible that Diane's aunt wasn't an actress at all (for at most a low-level bit player) whose name would not be recognized. Diane would not be able to rely on those connections in order to get work.

Diane then tells Coco that she lost the lead in *The Sylvia North Story* because the director "didn't think so much of me." In other words, she implies that the problem wasn't her fault (for instance, she didn't say, "I had a bad audition"), but that the director had something against her. She

doesn't say so explicitly, but her tone is such that she obviously believes that, no matter how good of an actress she was, there was no way that director was going to give her the role (outside of executives coming in and demanding that Diane must be cast, but that wasn't going to happen because, in Diane's mind, everyone had decided that Camilla was the one, not her). Diane, then, refuses to accept responsibility for losing the lead part, but places the blame on someone else.<sup>4</sup>

Another example of Diane's refusal to accept responsibility is revealed in an odd scene early in the movie that is part of Diane's dream. Betty has just arrived in Los Angeles with an elderly couple, Irene and "her companion" (as identified in the script). As Betty takes a cab to her aunt's



Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) in *Lost Highway*

apartment, the couple are shown in a limousine laughing, eyeing each other knowingly, while Irene slaps the gentleman on the leg three times. They have the look of two people who have just pulled off a great gag or scam and gotten away with it. This elderly couple is never identified, but they are seen with Diane onstage during her jitterbug contest win in Ontario—the win she used as a stepping stone to get to Hollywood. When things didn't work out the way Diane had hoped, she concludes that she was the victim of some scheme by this seemingly kind couple.

After Diane tells Coco about *The Sylvia North Story*, she says that, despite losing the role, she and Camilla became friends, and that Camilla "helped me getting some parts in some of her films." Here again, it's clear that the successes that Diane has enjoyed are the result of others' work. Things have simply fallen her way. There

<sup>4</sup>And even if Diane is correct here, and that the director did have something against her, she does not brush off the rejection and aggressively pursue more work. Instead, she retains the anger and bitterness that has gradually destroyed her.

is no mention of Diane "getting a role," only of having help in getting roles.

Diane's passivity is reflected again in her hire of the hitman to kill Camilla. While on some level it shows initiative and action, it is still, at its core, getting someone else to eliminate her problem (so to speak). But there is a deeper issue here, because it shows Diane's unwillingness to resolve her conflicts and anger at Camilla, but take the (seemingly) easier way out of just having her former friend removed from the scene. It's not that different from Diane's final decision to commit suicide. Unable to face the problems in her life and do the difficult work of moving ahead, she simply ends everything with a bullet.

A potentially interesting topic might be a comparison between the final moments of the lives of Diane Selwyn and Laura Palmer. After *Fire Walk With Me*, there was quite a bit of debate about whether Laura's death was murder (by Bob) or suicide, and if the latter, whether the suicide came as a result of strength or weakness. Is Laura too weak to face Bob's attack and the pain in her own life and therefore takes the Owl Cave ring, knowing that it will result in her death and the end of her suffering? Or does she nobly sacrifice herself, knowing that the alternative is allowing Bob to possess her and wreck havoc on Twin Peaks by using her as the vessel of that destruction? (See *Wrapped in Plastic* 34 for a more lengthy discussion of these issues.)

Whatever the case with Laura, there is no ambiguity with Diane. Her suicide is an act of depression, cowardice, guilt, and flight from reality. The full weight of her lost dreams and her crime—hiring the hitman to murder Camilla, which was successful—has hit her.

There is a powerful moment near the end of the film in which Diane sits motionless on her couch, staring into the space in front of her. It's an establishing shot, which accomplishes at least two things: it allows the scene to include the coffee table in front of Diane, and on that table rests a blue key (which, as we will see later, represents Camilla's murder); and it isolates Diane—she is all alone in a dirty, mostly empty apartment. She is, in fact, all alone in the world. Camilla appears to have been her only friend (if Irene were a friend, Diane has concocted a conspiracy theory that would prevent her from seeking Irene's help, and now she is dead because of Diane). Unable to face the loneliness or the crime, Diane commits suicide.

#### *Mentally and Physically Displaced*

In *Midnight Drive*, just like in *Lost Highway*, Lynch subtly relates the mental states of the characters to their surroundings. In *Lost Highway*, we proposed (in *Wrapped in Plastic* 28) that Fred Madison's mental state was reflected in his home—more precisely, that "the house is not only a real object within the film....[but] also it is a metaphor for Fred's mind....Perhaps the



[complex] design reflects Fred's confused state of mind." When Fred tells his wife at one point that nobody was inside the house, it relates to Fred's mental state: "Fred's sense of identity has become/is becoming/will become fractured into multiple identities, leaving no-one inside."<sup>6</sup>

This theme of connecting homes to occupants has a literary lineage,<sup>6</sup> but it also is something that Lynch has been interested in from his earliest filmmaking days. Before *Eraserhead*, Lynch was working on *Gardenback*, a story in which "an insect...grew in this man's attic, which was like his mind. The house was like his head."<sup>7</sup>

Fred Madison's madness and identity crisis is presented in *Lost Highway* with a convoluted floor plan, dark hallways, and mysterious lights and shadows flitting about. For the most part Lynch takes a different tact in *Mulholland Drive*. While retaining (to some extent) the convoluted floor plan—Betty seems to make a lot of twists and turns just to get from the living room to the bedroom in a relatively small apartment—the more prominent element is the displacement of characters from their usual environment.

Just as Diane is experiencing an identity crisis, represented not only in the creation of Betty and Rita—two aspects of herself—but in Rita's own amnesia. Betty is not "at home." She is both mentally and physically in strange, new surroundings. She is visiting Hollywood from Deep River, Ontario, and staying at her aunt's apartment. (Note also that her aunt is not at home, being off in Canada shooting a movie.) Betty finds Rita hiding out in the apartment, so Rita, too, is displaced—physically (obviously) but also

mentally, because she has the amnesia.

This might be seen as a coincidence, but Lynch maintains this theme through the dream. When Adam Kesher finds his wife in bed with the pool man, he gets tossed out of his home and ends up having to stay at a decrepit downtown motel until

viewer later learns that Ruth died, but this scene (in addition to accomplishing other things) begins to re-set the course. The dream has broken down—Rita has "discovered" her identity (of sorts) in Betty; Betty disappears, followed by Rita and the mysterious box itself; then Ruth (wearing the exact same clothes as she wore at the beginning of the dream when leaving in a cab) reappears briefly back in her own home. It's as if to say, none of the preceding really happened; it was all a dream, an illusion.

We don't mean to suggest that the physical displacement of characters is a central concern of *Mulholland Drive*, merely that it continues a longstanding interest of Lynch's and reinforces the primary theme of lost identity. As in the Red Room (and, as we shall see in a moment, Club Silencio), the physical environment reflects the mental state.

### III. ILLUSION AND REALITY

#### *Illusions in the City of Dreams*

The theme of illusion does not present itself until well into the film, but when it does, it practically takes over, forcing the viewer to re-evaluate everything that has gone before. It begins, appropriately enough, with a scene that takes place at two o'clock in the morning—a time when many people are asleep and perhaps dreaming. Betty and Rita have just made love, and Rita awakes and insists that the two women head off to Club Silencio. In this small theater, a magician begins his performance by declaring that there is no band or orchestra,

and yet everyone can hear a band and various instruments because "[t]his is all a tape recording...It is an illusion."

A trumpet player appears on stage and seems to be playing, yet he removes the instrument from his lips while the music continues, proving that he wasn't really performing at all. The climax arrives when Rebekah Del Rio sings a searing version of Roy Orbison's "Crying" in Spanish, deeply affecting Betty and Rita, before collapsing on stage. Yet the song continues. Even this heart-rending performance was an illusion.

Club Silencio is essentially the Red Room for *Mulholland Drive*. Note that red drapes are in the background, and there's always music in the air. It seems to have more of a psychological reality than a physical one—although this is still Diane Selwyn's dream, in which case Club Silencio is a kind of dream within a dream, or, as



Diane (Naomi Watts)

he can find a more permanent place to stay. The scene at the Sierra Bonita apartments continues the displacement: when Betty and Rita go to apartment 12 to look for Diane Selwyn, they find another woman, who explains that she and Diane "switched apartments." She's in #17. There is no story-related reason for this to occur other than to emphasize that people are not where they "should" be.

Compare this, however, to the situation when the movie shifts to the "real" events. Diane is in her own apartment (though the switch with the woman in #12 did occur three weeks earlier). Adam is back in his expensive home (his wife is the one who had to leave) by order of a judge. Camilla is presumably living in her own home, since she does not have amnesia. There is even a segment at the very end of Diane's dream in which Ruth is back at her apartment, not in Canada. Of course, the

<sup>6</sup>Craig Miller and John Thorne, "Road Trip," *Wrapped in Plastic* 28 (April 1997): p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>For example, who can forget the eerie opening passages of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," in which the madness of the occupant (and his ancestors) is suggested by the description of the home's exterior? The idea of establishing a connection between characters and their environment as a whole goes back even further. For instance, in the King Arthur stories, there was a relationship between the health of the king and the health or prosperity of the land over which he ruled. (See *From Ritual to Romance* by Jessie Weston.)

<sup>8</sup>K. George Godwin, "Eraserhead," *Cinefantastique* (September 1984), p. 46.

Lynch would probably put it, a deeper level of her consciousness (or subconsciousness). If the dream as a whole is Diane's subconsciousness or innermost being reflecting or presenting truths about herself, her identity, and her world, then Club Silencio is the final moment of impact, where everything has been leading. The dream by itself may or may not have gotten through to Diane's consciousness, but Club Silencio will provide the final push.

The primary theme of the scene is illusion. As such, it's not accidental that a magician is the first person Betty and Rita (and the film viewer) see on stage. The magician understands that everything here is an illusion—illusions are, after all, his stock in trade. When the trumpet player enters the stage, he appears to play with conviction, yet he removes the trumpet from his lips with a grand motion. He is obviously in on the "trick."

But what of Rebekah Del Río?

Until the very end of her performance, there is no indication that Del Río's singing is on tape. Lynch cleverly separates her song from the magician by having another man, a master of ceremonies (Cookie, a hotel manager where Adam is staying after he gets kicked out of his house), introduce Del Río. This is, apparently, a new part of the show, and not part of the magician's act. Del Río sings with passion and conviction, bringing Betty and Rita to tears, and finally herself collapsing. The question is, does she even know that the song was prerecorded and would finish whether she did or not? Because the singing was a capella, there were no obvious clues that any tape was involved.

This is a crucial moment in the film, and this critical question may not be answered conclusively. Del Río has a tear painted on her right cheek as part of her makeup, indicating that she's aware of the illusion—this is all fake. Yet she pours herself into her performance completely. Perhaps she begins the song knowing about the illusion but gets so caught up in her singing that she momentarily forgets. Or perhaps she never knows to begin with.

The latter might be the more appropriate conclusion. Remember that Club Silencio is a part of Diane's psyche, and there is evidence that she believes that she is the innocent victim of terrible circumstances in life. She believes she's done everything right, played by the rules, yet outside forces have conspired against her, resulting in her failure—even to the point of her belief that the elderly couple who accompanied her from Canada set her up for failure in Hollywood!

Rebekah Del Río's performance is an indication that, according to Diane, there is a larger game, a larger reality, and she is merely a pawn in it. Like an actor, she can mouth the words—she might be able to perform them brilliantly, in fact—but they've already been written by someone else, and if she drops out, the larger story will continue.

It's appropriate, then, for such themes

to be presented in a film about actors and filmmaking. All throughout the movie, there are scenes and pieces of dialogue that relate to the playing of roles—it's no wonder that Diane is suffering from an identity crisis. From the beginning Rita is playing a role because she has no identity, and not coincidentally she takes the name of an actress. Later, when Betty wants to call the police to see what she can find out about Rita's car accident, she convinces a hesitant Rita by saying, "It'll be just like in the movies. We'll pretend to be someone

trapped. This is, of course, how Diane sees her world: she is a great actress who did not make it big because the universe is aligned against her, and she is powerless to fight and prevail.

The first time the line appears in the film, (haughty executives [the Castiglione brothers] are forcing director Adam Keshner to cast an unknown actress as the female lead in his new film. He balks, saying that six of the top actresses are vying for the job, but the executives are unmoved. Without reason or explanation, they simply tell him



Rita

else." During Betty's audition scene (which, we'll note, is Betty—a part of Diane—then trying out to play someone else), Betty hears the actor tell the director, "Acting is reacting." In other words, the actor plays off of what he is presented with, as opposed to creating his own reality. A good actor merely creates an illusion that he is presenting reality. If he forgets the distinction between the two—believes in the illusion itself—then he will end up like Del Río, or worse, Diane—mentally unbalanced and suicidal.

"This is the girl."

There is certainly a nihilistic theme here—not surprising, since this is Diane's dream, after all—that is reinforced by the recurring line, "This is the girl." If Mulholland Drive were a song, that line would be the refrain at the end of each verse. It appears throughout the film, spoken by different characters in different locations and circumstances. Its meaning is at once obvious, almost simplistic, and yet mysterious. It hints at hidden dealings and behind-the-scenes workings in Hollywood and suggests a deterministic world governed by unseen forces, or fate, that plays people like pawns and has them

three times that "this is the girl" he must cast. They bring a photo of Camilla Rhodes (different from the real-life Camilla that Diane loves), and tell him that if he does not cast her, he apparently will be removed from the project. He refuses.

Adam believes he has been fired, but actually he has just been reminded that the movie does not belong to him; he is merely the director and can be replaced by the money men who ultimately control the project. Adam is corrected when he has a late-night meeting with "the Cowboy," a strange philosopher-type whose position in the project is never revealed. Neither is his relationship with the executives or the mysterious Mr. Roque (if any) explained. He simply tells Adam, "I want you to go back to work tomorrow. You were recasting the lead actress anyway. Audition many girls for the part. When you see the girl that was shown to you earlier today, you will say, 'This is the girl.'"

Adam is, essentially, given a second chance. He adamantly refused to consider the girl during the earlier meeting and learned the consequences—not only was the film production shut down, but his bank canceled his line of credit. Whoever the Castiglione brothers were, they had a

lot of power, or at least knew how to access it.

The next day, Adam auditions actresses. As the scene begins, we watches "Carol" audition for the role. She is eager to get the part, but Adam says he must see the other actresses before making a final decision. Next up is Camilla Rhodes. After listening to her lip-synch briefly, he says, "This is the girl," not believing what he's saying but essentially helpless to argue the issue. Roy, the president of production (as identified in the script; his position is not identified in the film) who was at the earlier meeting, responds, "Excellent choice, Adam."

During Camilla's audition, Betty has been brought in to the studio with the intention of meeting Adam, but she leaves before they can be introduced. However, their eyes meet, and clearly something is happening between them. As Adam says that Camilla is "the girl," it's obvious he's thinking that Betty is a more interesting possibility.

In light of the revelation that this entire sequence is part of Diane's dream, there are several fascinating things going on here. As Betty represents Diane (or at least a part of Diane) in the dream, the scene is a way of showing that Diane is the true star, the true talent, but that circumstances, fate, whatever, have prevailed against her to deny her the role that should be hers. That role is going to Camilla Rhodes, not because she's more talented (or at least hasn't established that she's more talented), but because the powers-that-be have simply designated that she's the one. She's the girl, and Betty/Diane is not.

We should not pass too quickly over the parenthetical comment that Camilla has not established herself as having the greater talent. One of the themes of the "this is the girl" line is that the choice is made arbitrarily out of the dozens or hundreds or thousands of starlets that populate Hollywood, all of them young and beautiful and fresh and eager to act in films. What differentiates the new sensation from the actress who is never heard from? Is it fate—that certain things are simply meant to be—or more underhanded dealings?

Perhaps a look at how Lynch himself casts his movies is instructive. He does not have his actors do readings, because he considers that both unfair to the actors and useless to him—because it's not a realistic environment in which to obtain a good impression of how appropriate someone might be for a role. Instead, Lynch just talks to the actor—mostly about things unrelated to the role—in order to get a feel for how someone might work out for a role. At some point he simply makes a

gut choice that "this is the girl (or guy)" for a particular part.

Before the interview, however, Lynch narrows his search by looking at photos of actors. The parallels to the scene in *Mulholland Drive* are amusing, though clearly Lynch is parodying executive interference. It is, after all, the executives who force the casting on Adam through the use of the photo; it's not Adam's choice. Still, what is it that determines why this actor might be right for the role? Lynch probably couldn't say himself, beyond the feeling that one person is right and the other person is wrong. "This is the girl," meaning that the others are not "the girl."

For Diane, however, the situation is different. "This is the girl" relates to the interchangeability and arbitrariness of casting, resulting (in her case) in her being denied work, even though she's at least as good, if not better, than the other choices available. This is emphasized in at least three ways. First, as noted above, there is no demonstrable reason why Camilla is "the girl" and the others are not. But the point is driven home more specifically in the final Diane scenes, especially in two scenes that run almost back to back.

At the dinner party, in what may be the most intense and wrenching moments in the entire movie, Diane watches as an unnamed woman (who gets re-imagined as Camilla in the dream) walks over to the table at which Adam and Camilla are sitting, leans over, and gives Camilla a sur-

It's an eerie scene to begin with—the dream Camilla and the real Camilla kissing each other. Questions of identity immediately arise, given the context of the film, but for Diane, it's something more. Diane believes that, as far as Camilla is concerned, she (Diane) is this other, unnamed woman are interchangeable. Diane was certain that she had a special and unique love with Camilla, but it turns out that she was just one of—how many? Diane and the dream-Camilla look very much alike, and apparently Camilla had relationships with both, perhaps alternating between the two. When Camilla and the dream-Camilla look at Diane after their kiss, they smile slightly, as if (like Camilla's look at Diane on set after kissing Adam) mocking Diane for her naïveté, perhaps even her ignorance.

Immediately following the dinner party scene, there is another flashback at Winkie's, where Diane meets with the hitman. She tosses onto the table a photo of Camilla, and the line appears one last time in the movie:

Diane: This is the girl.

Hitman: Don't show me this f---ing thing here.

Diane: It's just an actress's photo résumé. Everybody's got one.

"Everybody's got one": a seemingly benign statement (which is true, of course—everybody in Hollywood does have a photo résumé) gets turned here, in the context of the rest of the film, into one more example of Diane's belief that the actresses catching the breaks aren't more talented than she, because everybody's essentially the same. The others have just been lucky. They've been fated to succeed, and she has not.

#### Discovering Hidden Power

In our interview with Justin Theroux last issue, he said that for him the film is about "the illusion of power." Just as the power of Rebekah Del Rio's song was not in her performance at all, but in a pre-recorded tape, power in Hollywood is by unseen layers of mysterious men, not the on-camera individuals (or even the on-set creators). There is a lot of truth to that, though of course in actual Hollywood, the actors have an incredible amount of power. But most of the Hollywood presented in *Mulholland Drive* is seen through Diane's paranoia, and here, even directors (who may not "think so much" about a particular actress) are given ultimatums about whom to cast.

The instructions to the directors are handed down through the producers, who in turn are given ultimatums by Mafia-like executives. Yet even these moments are



Camilla and "Camilla" (Harring and Melissa George)

prisingly long kiss on the lips. Afterward, they both glance at Diane, who looks like she's about to have a nervous breakdown right on the spot. She's slightly hunched over and can barely keep her body from shaking. It appears that, any moment now, she's literally going to crumble to pieces.

captured by hidden microphones, and the final decisions appear to rest with Mr. Rogue, a strangely deformed man sitting almost alone in the center of a darkly-lit office.

The relationship between Rogue and the executives is unclear, though he is obviously more powerful than the producers, as one of them [Ray] needs Rogue's okay to shut down production on Adam's film after he refused to cast Camilla Rhodes.

Rogue is a man of opulence and few words. [He speaks approximately five words in the film—two one-word questions and a three-word statement.] At the other end of the spectrum is another person of power—a bum who lives behind Winkie's Restaurant on Sunset Boulevard. Like Rogue, he has little to say [actually no dialogue at all] but wields a far greater amount of power. He is the one who is causing Dan such distress that Dan must make a visit to Winkie's with his friend Herb to "get rid of this god-awful feeling" induced by the bum: "He's the one. He's the one that's doing it." Dan and Herb walk, with a fair amount of trepidation, behind the restaurant to investigate. The bum emerges from behind a wall, and Dan immediately has a heart attack and apparently dies.

Is this bum real or a creation of Diane's clearly-demented mind? Near the end of the film, during the "real life" section, the bum reappears holding a mysterious blue box that seems to be connected to Diane's identity and fate in some way. Is this possible? Previous Lynch films may provide clues. Like the Man in the Planet (from *Eraserhead*), perhaps he is a behind-the-scenes manipulator. Just as Mr. Rogue manipulates events in the material world (i.e. film production in Hollywood), the bum holds far greater power—control over a person's soul. Likewise, the Mystery Man in *Last Highway* appears to have similar supernatural abilities, controlling (or at least influencing) Fred Madison's fate.

Unlike the Mystery Man, however, Mulholland Drive's bum exhibits no mysterious powers per se. He simply sits holding a box, or, in the case of Dan, emerges from behind a wall. Dan assigns him special powers, but Dan may not be the most reliable source of information, particularly in light of the revelation later that he's merely a character in Diane's dream—a character that is an embellishment of someone she doesn't even know, but caught of glimpse of once at Winkie's.

Like most of the other main characters in the movie, the bum appears in both Diane's dream and real life sections. Friends and acquaintances (and virtual strangers) of Diane get re-interpreted in the dream. Perhaps the bum in the dream

is based on someone Diane saw. Though more mundane than a theory proposing that the bum is a supernatural being of some sort, this does fit in with what happens in the rest of the movie.

Let's consider for a moment the bum's appearance in the "real life" scenes. Lynch places it at an interesting and important moment, bridging a series of Diane's memories and her current situation. She remembers being at the dinner party where Adam announces his upcoming marriage to Camilla, and she remembers hiring the hitman at Winkie's. That scene ends with the hitman's showing Diane a blue key and saying that when he's accomplished his task of killing Camilla, Diane will "find this where I told you" (apparently on her coffee table). Diane asks, "What's it open?" The hitman doesn't answer, but just laughs.

It is at this moment that the bum appears. He is holding a blue box, which he puts into a paper sack, then drops the

about dreams, life, and specifically life in Hollywood (and the film industry).

Nevertheless, dream-like or not, all of the "real" scenes are from Diane's point of view. She is clearly in every scene (until the bum appears), so, from a storytelling standpoint, Lynch would be going outside conventional rules by cutting to an event completely outside of Diane's experience. Hazard and unexplained shifts in point of view is a common error of inexperienced writers, and we would have a hard time believing Lynch would make such an obvious mistake.

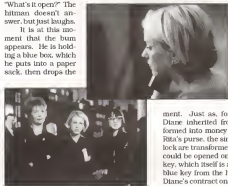
It's reasonable to assume, then, that at some point Diane—like Dan—saw the bum, or at least a bum. It's easy to believe that, during one of her visits to Winkie's,

Diane noticed a man sitting behind the restaurant. [Such would not be out of the ordinary in Los Angeles.] Perhaps (probably) the bum was holding a blue box and a sack with a padlock in it. From this casual encounter, the dream presents a fantastic embellishment.

Just as, for instance, the money Diane inherited from her aunt is transformed into money mysteriously found in Rita's purse, the simple blue box and padlock are transformed into a locked box that could be opened only by a triangular blue key, which itself is a reconfiguration of the blue key from the hitman that symbolizes Diane's contract on Camilla, and Camilla's subsequent murder.

In Diane's delusional state, a homeless bum—perhaps the lowest in the social structure of society—becomes all-powerful, the possessor of Diane's soul, or fate. Diane is engaging in an ideology of victimology to an extreme, believing that she is helpless even to an inconsequential street person. Diane, deluding herself into believing that she was a great actress, was ultimately prevented from achieving her dreams because of a bum, who held her fate in his hands and would not allow her to succeed. He is the master manipulator, the man behind the scenes, behind the walls. Diane has seen through those walls, witnessed him face to face, and, believing that "he's the one that's doing it," believes herself to be powerless to stop him. Just like Dan in the dream, Diane's only response is the inability to go on. Fate has decided that she cannot live.

We're presenting two arguments for the identity of the bum, drawing interpretations from the Mulholland Drive and previous Lynch films, and it should be clear that, because Lynch does not define the bum's identity precisely, neither interpretation can automatically be ruled out. Lynch might even argue that the two interpretations constitute a distinction without a difference—whether the bum is a master



Top: Betty. Bottom: Laura James (Rita Taggart, left) and Nikki (Michelle Hicks) take Betty to meet Adam.

sack onto the ground at his feet, where it falls open. In addition to the blue box, there is a padlock inside. Soon, miniature versions of the elderly couple—Brene and the gentleman—emerge from the sack. From here, the scene cuts to the present, where Diane sits alone in her apartment, staring at the blue key in front of her and only moments away from suicide.

The scene with the bum concludes Diane's flashbacks and is presented in the same manner as all the other scenes—which doesn't necessarily resolve the question as to the nature of the bum. All of the material that appears in the "real" post-dream segment is strangely shot and edited, in that it is very dream-like (consider, for instance, Camilla's walk with Diane through the trees to get to the dinner party), even hallucinatory in places, as opposed to the dream section, which is photographed very naturalistically. There are certain real-life explanations for this,\* but Lynch could be making a larger point

\*Namely, that the dream segment, when originally shot for the ABC television pilot, wasn't the "real" story, and not Diane's dream.

"The bum is actually played by a woman and should probably be referred to as "she." However, the person is referred to as "he" by Dan in the restaurant, so, to avoid confusion, we'll use that same pronoun when referring to the bum.



The mysterious Mr. Roque (Michael J. Anderson)

manipulator or not, Diane believes him to be so, and that belief is partly what drives her to suicide. She believes that she has come face to face with a being of power and fear, and, because of her guilt,<sup>12</sup> she concludes she has no option other than to kill herself.

In the film, Lynch establishes this parallel interpretation pertaining to the bum. In the restaurant, Dan tells Herb about his dream: "It's the second one I've had, but they're both the same." There are, then, two dreams at work, which is reflected in *Mulholland Drive* as a whole—Diane's dream, and Diane's dream-like real life (as discussed above). Events and people in Diane's life reappear in Diane's dream. They aren't identical (as implied in Dan's statement); they get reinterpreted. Nevertheless, to a large degree they are "the same." As such, the bum—like Rita—can be, and can represent, many things within Diane's life and psyche.

As Diane's memory of the bum turns delusional—miniature versions of the elderly couple emerge from the paper sack—Diane sits in her apartment. The blue key is in front of her on the coffee table. Someone pounds on her front door. It's probably the police. Earlier, when the tenant in apartment #12 stopped by to pick up her lamp and dishes, she told Diane, "Those two detectives came by looking for you." The investigation into Camilla's murder has begun, and Diane is wanted for questioning, or possibly for arrest. Diane will not open the door, but her guilt, or conscience, or whatever, pursue her. The elderly couple—the investigators (according to Diane) of the entire chain of events that led to failure, depression, madness, and murder—pursue her by crawling through the crack under the door. They become full size (or even larger-than-life) once inside, and Diane flees. She has shown through-

<sup>12</sup>Or maybe not because of her guilt. When Dan comes face to face with the bum, he has a heart attack, yet there's no indication that he deserves such a fate.

out the film that she is too passive to fight for what she wants, but by now it's too late anyway. She is an accomplice to murder, and there is no escape. She runs into the bedroom, pulls a handgun from her dresser, and shoots herself. As she's dying, scenes appear of Los Angeles at night with superimposed images of Betty and Rita, and, strangely, the bum. Even to the end, Diane cannot escape his presence.

Regardless of our interpretations about the bum as he relates to the film's themes of power and control, and how Diane might transform a meaningless blue box into a symbol, it doesn't explain what the box itself represents. It's quite possible, of course, that it doesn't represent anything specific, but is merely a unifying element to bring together various themes and plots. Nevertheless, just because it's not spelled out simply, we should at least investigate whether Lynch has provided clues to present some understanding of the identity of the box.

Although the bum appears in the original ABC material, as does the triangular blue key, the box itself does not. Whatever Lynch first intended the key to open, he has not said (and almost certainly will never say, possibly because he hadn't worked out the plot that far in advance). With the new material, Lynch makes the blue key the symbol of Camilla's murder (at least); it also could be considered a symbol of Diane's failure in Hollywood, her jealousy, her moral corruption in hiring a hitman, and her insanity!

The triangular key opens the blue box, inside of which is nothing but darkness. The camera zooms forward, and the screen is filled with black. Here it is

instructive to recall the conversation between Diane and the hitman:

**Hitman:** You've got the money?  
**Diane:** Sure do.  
**Hitman:** Now once you hand that over to me, it's a done deal. You sure you want this?  
**Diane:** More than anything in this world.  
**Hitman:** When it's finished, you'll find this [blue key] where I told you.<sup>13</sup>  
**Diane:** What's it open?

At this point the hitman laughs. What does the key open? Darkness—the darkness in Diane's soul. It opens the worst aspects of herself. Like Pandora's opening the box containing the ills of the world, Diane's commission of murder provides a mechanism whereby the most evil parts of herself will flourish and find expression. Her hire of the hitman is the key that opens her darkness, which up to this point has been contained.

*Note to Self: This isn't Real*

Contemporary thinking has cast doubt on the nature of reality; indeed, it's peculiar to

see the term itself without being in quotes: "reality." True, arriving at a precise definition for the word can get difficult, but our culture, awash in emotion and subjectivism, has exacerbated the situation. And while we don't want to turn *Mulholland Drive* to a dry, philosophical text, it is fascinating how it plays perfectly into the debates about reality (or "reality"), because of its powerful presentation of Diane's real life, fantasy life, and dreams, all within the larger context of Hollywood as the "City of Dreams."

More specifically, the dream works as a psychic message from Diane to Diane, providing clues that this dream is not reality while leading Diane back to her current predicament. We have to be careful here not to assign too much will to this dream. Despite our subtitle for this sec-

<sup>13</sup>There are several shots of the key resting on the edge of Diane's coffee table. That may have been where the hitman left it, or it may have been where Diane put it after she found it. (We would guess the former.) There doesn't seem to be any significance to the coffee table per se, although when Coco gives the keys to Ruth's apartment to Betty (in the dream), Betty takes the key and drops it on the coffee table (the viewer can hear it clang as it falls).



The Mystery Man (Robert Blake) from *Lost Highway*

© 1996 October Films

tion, the dream is not, specifically speaking, a note from Diane to Diane, because that presumes a willfulness on the part of some level of Diane's subconsciousness that cannot be verified. Dreams don't work that way, with a precision that can be easily deduced. They weave and wander, mixing real events with invented ones that reflect desires and fears. Some characters and objects correspond to things within the dreamer's life; others are merely symbols. Whatever the case, it is more accurate to say that "I saw this in a dream" than to say that "a dream was trying to show me [such and such]."

As such, Diane's dream should be seen as a presentation, a revelation, of something deep within Diane's psyche, some explosion of her subconscious that finds expression. Diane is not controlling this dream; her "subconscious" is not con-

trolling it. The dream merely expresses certain things, and Diane gives them meaning.

We are speaking within the context of the story, of course. Stepping outside the story and looking at the making of the film, Lynch has carefully chosen which events are to be a part of Diane's dream. If, then there is a "will" to be spoken of regarding the dream, it is Lynch's himself, not Diane's. And one of these recurring elements within the dream is the reality (or lack thereof) of the situation. Not only are there constant reminders that the dream is just a dream, but that Betty and Rita are not real. Like the situation with Fred Madison's fantasy in *Lost Highway* and the constant hints that it was only a fantasy, Diane's dream has a steady drumbeat of reminders.

While some of these reminders are specifically about Diane's (Betty's) iden-

tity, others are about the entire situation. Notably, some of the most important moments take place in scenes that relate to actors (and, thus, the assuming of roles or alternate identities): Betty's audition for Wally Brown; Adam's audition of the actresses; and, much later, Adam's rehearsal with Camilla as Diane looks on. (An extensive comparison of these scenes would prove fascinating but is, for now, beyond the scope of this essay.)

Regarding the subject of reality, it comes up directly in the dialogue of two of those scenes. As Betty is about to rehearse her scene with Jimmy Katz, the director, Bob Brookler, says, "It's not a contest, see, the two of them with themselves, so don't play it for real until it gets real." Betty isn't sure what to make of these instructions, and to a large extent Lynch is satirizing pompous directors here (it's a line that

## "You drive me wild."

Lynch's fascination with roads and automobiles continues in *Mulholland Drive*. This makes his third film in a row to feature traveling, and two of the past three have included roads in the title. Many of the most memorable scenes in Lynch's films have involved cars in some manner. We noted some of this in our review of *The Straight Story* (WIP 44), but to recap:

*Blue Velvet*: Frank Booth and his gang take Jeffrey Beaumont out on a harrowing joyride in which Jeffrey is violently beaten.

*Wild at Heart*: Not only is this a road movie, but one of the most talked-about scenes involves an automobile accident with a bleeding Sherilyn Fenn wandering aimlessly from the wreckage.

*Pre Walk With Me*: Probably the most widely-praised scene is when Leland and Laura are at a traffic stop, and Phillip Gerard begins screaming, "You stole the corn!"

*Lost Highway*: The title is an essential clue, of course, and the movie begins and ends with a fast drive down a deserted highway. But one of the most memorable scenes—a scene that only Lynch could pull off so brilliantly—has him, Eddy running a tailgater off the road and mercilessly beating him, all the while demanding that he read a driver's manual the first opportunity he gets. (Ironically, this scene supposedly takes place on Mulholland Drive.)

*The Straight Story*: Like *Wild at Heart*, this is another Lynch road movie, albeit a much more gentle one. Beyond that, there's the unforgettable scene of the "deer woman": a woman becomes hysterical after hitting a deer on a road (not in the middle of nowhere; how did she not see it?), and it turns out that she has hit thirteen deer in the past seven weeks,

all on that same road!

And now, *Mulholland Drive*. As in *Lost Highway*, the title refers to a road, but the subtle differences are indicative of the differences in the films themselves. *Mulholland Drive* is a specific road, one that actually does exist in Los Angeles. It is a long, winding, convoluted road alongside the Santa Monica Mountains. The road separates the Los Angeles basin (Beverly Hills, West Hollywood) and the San Fernando Valley, and from it one can look down upon the city—in other words, it provides a point of view high above Los Angeles. In contrast, *Lost Highway* refers to no particular street, but in fact a general type of road (and journey)—one that has no clear destination, or at least no planned destination. It provides no special vantage point from which one can examine an area (or, by analogy, a situation). Fred Madison is "lost in confusion and darkness" (in Lynch's words), so that makes *Lost Highway* an appropriate title.

Diane Scheyn is also lost in confusion and darkness, but not in the same way as Fred, and the road in *Mulholland Drive* has a different function. As with the actual road, it reflects the story structure and Diane's state of mind—twisting, apparently meandering, but nevertheless leading in a specific, inevitable direction. It is a road not ultimately of confusion, but of mystery, danger, and adventure. In the Diane sequence at the end of the movie, there is this interesting exchange when Camilla is lying naked on the couch in Diane's apartment:

Diane: What was that you were saying, beautiful?

Camilla: I said, "You drive me wild."

And it is, of course, a wild drive that takes

place on Mulholland Drive. Actually, it takes place twice—once when Diane is on her way to Adam's dinner party, and once in the dream's re-creation of the scene that has Rita making the same ride. This is apparently the beginning of Diane's dream and contains several important themes that will be pursued throughout the film. First, it reflects Diane's love/hate relationship with Camilla, who becomes Rita and barely escapes death twice within a few minutes. The chauffeur suddenly stops and pulls a gun on Rita, demanding that she "get out of the car" in a deserted area, presumably so that he can kill her. She is "saved," so to speak, by some drag racing teens who speed around the corner and slam into Rita's limousine, killing the driver and his associate and injuring Rita. She is spared death but suffers amnesia, thus having to depend on Betty for assistance in discovering her identity. (Diane, on the other hand, succeeds in killing both herself and Camilla.)

Secondly, the scene provides early clues that Rita is not just an altered form of Camilla, but a part of Diane herself.\* Rita has a bag of money but no idea where it came from. Also, Rita is taking the exact same ride that Diane took with a similar stop at a deserted area. Of course, Diane was not threatened with murder there, but met by Camilla. Still, it turned out to be the last time that the two were alone together, and the entire scene—mesmerizingly photographed with extraordinary music by Angelo Badalamenti—must have, in retrospect, felt like a kind of death to Diane, for soon afterward she would learn of Camilla's impending marriage to Adam.

\*All of this becomes complex, because Diane in many ways is jealous of Camilla, while angry at her (and jealous of Adam) because Camilla left her for the director.

inevitably generates a laugh with the audience. But note that it contains two ideas—identity (“the two of them with themselves”) and reality (“...until it gets real”)—that are themes of *Mulholland Drive*. If the director's instructions mean anything [beyond the clever word games that Lynch delights in], it's that Diane is becoming too caught up in her fantasy life, and that she should con-

audition of the actresses, does not specifically reference “reality,” but the entire scene is layered in reality and illusion. Lynch hired real actors for *Mulholland Drive* to play roles as film actors who are auditioning for a role—but not just any role. They are auditioning to play the lead character in what appears to be an autobiographical account of a singer (Sylvia North?)—in

It's a stunning moment in *Mulholland Drive*, as Lynch presents what appears to be a “real moment” that gets peeled back, layer by layer, to reveal its unreality. It works as a metaphor for the entire film: the Betty/Rita story appears to be the “real” story, but it turns out to be a performance of sorts, a psychological presentation that has altered people and events in Diane's life into a fantasy retelling.

Perhaps the most interesting hint within the dream that all is not right deals with the way the phone is used. Lynch has used this technique before in *Lost Highway*. There is the creepy party scene in which the Mystery Man performs what appears to be Fred Midson to be a parlor trick—Fred calls his own home number, and the Mystery Man not only answers, but continues the conversation Fred was having with the man standing in front of him. Phones are in other memorable scenes, especially when Fred calls his wife at home, and the phone rings loudly in the empty room.<sup>19</sup>

In *Wrapped in Plastic* 28, we suggested that the Mystery Man “trick” was essentially Fred's psychic message to himself—that someone else was in his “house” (i.e. his mind) because Fred had invited him in (in other words, because of Fred's own decisions and actions). *Mulholland Drive* appears to contain the same sort of idea. Early in the film, even before Adam refuses to cast Camilla as the lead in his film, Roque initiates a series of phone calls. He calls one man (who is seen only from behind) and says, “She's still missing.” At the time it seems to be a reference to Rita, who has wandered off from her car accident. The man then makes another call. A wall phone rings in a dirty kitchen. An unidentified man (we see only his arm; the script calls him the “hairy-armed man”) answers with, “Talk to me.” The other man says, “The same.” The hairy-armed man hangs up and makes another call. The phone rings but is not answered.

It is not until the final section of the movie that the audience learns that this phone belongs to Diane (when she answers the phone call from Camilla asking if she's coming to the dinner party). What we have, then, is a strange chain of calls beginning with Roque and ending with Diane—or at least with Diane's phone, since it goes unanswered. What is going on here? Because the identity of Roque is

<sup>19</sup>Though not related to this theme, we should point out that one of the most talked-about scenes from the *Twin Peaks* plot is the phone call in which Sarah Palmer learns about the death of Laura, and the camera slowly pans down the extension cord.



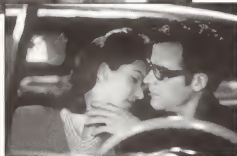
cern herself with the real thing. The “two of them with themselves” is another word game, playing with pronouns and suggestions of two merging into one.

Later, during the real life section of the movie, Diane remembers visiting Adam Kesher's movie set and watching him direct the actor on how he wants a scene played with Camilla. He begins by saying, “Don't sit so rigid. Just, just relax.”<sup>20</sup> He continues: “The two of you are alone. And it's real comfortable. Like you've known each other forever.”

There's an odd emphasis on the word “real,” drawing attention to it. It gets an additional punctuation by being repeated immediately afterward: “Even if you don't say anything, it's real comfortable.” (Note that the dialogue also includes a reference to “the two of you” in a virtual rephrasing of Brooker's comments.) Considering the two scenes together, first Brooker tells Betty that, essentially, this is not real—the real thing would come later. And then later, on Adam's set, Diane encounters reality.

The third scene noted above, Adam's

<sup>20</sup>Compare this with Brooker's comments to Betty and Jimmy after the audition: “Very good. Really. I mean it was forced maybe but still humanistic.”



Top: Carol (Elizabeth Lackey, center) and backup singers audition for Adam. Bottom: Camilla and Adam (Justin Theroux).

other words, they're auditioning to play the role of a person based on someone else!

Lynch emphasizes the layers of reality (and unreality) by cleverly setting up the shot so that the camera begins with a close up of the actress's performance for Adam, but the audience does not immediately realize this. It's simply a singer performing. The camera pulls back, and the audience can see that the singer is “boxed in” by a window frame—the camera is shooting the scene through a window. But the window is part of a fake wall, because it's part of a make-shift set. The camera continues pulling back, and soon the scene includes the original singer, the set, and the crew filming the audition. Plus, of course, Adam is sitting off to one side watching the performance.

mysterious, the meaning of the calls is difficult to pin down. However, if Roque is a man of control, a man of power, a man behind the scenes ("behind the wall," as Dan put it at Winkie's), and is attempting to make contact with Diane, it may symbolize once again Diane's belief in her helplessness—that, like the bum, there are entities behind the scenes pulling strings. The dream suggests that attempts to break through this fantasy remain unheard; Diane is adamant about her victimization and, like Fred Madison, simply will not or cannot acknowledge the truth of the situation. In this light, "She's still missing" refers not to Rita, but Diane—she remains in her dream world, lost to the realities of her actual life of a failed career, followed by the murder of Camilla.

It's also notable that the phone call to Diane is immediately followed by Betty's arrival in Hollywood—and that this is Betty's first appearance in the film (and Diane's dream). During a moment when the possibility for self-understanding and self-realization is possible, she retreats further into a fantasy world with an idealized version of herself.

#### *Crying Unlocks the Doors*

The relationship between fantasy and reality is a constant in the film and representative of life in Hollywood, where the process of moviemaking is to present audiences with an illusion of reality, not only in the storytelling, but even in the medium of motion pictures itself: audiences are not, technically speaking, watching people when they see a movie, but light projected onto a screen. The actual people are not only several steps (media) removed, but what audiences are seeing happened (i.e., was performed) months, if not years, earlier, and they are only characters, anyway—actors trying to convince an audience that they aren't whom they appear to be. The best actors are able to create the best illusions, such that audiences no longer see the actors themselves, but the characters those actors are portraying.

In *Mulholland Drive*, these ideas are placed within the context of Diane's story in which, as in *The Wizard of Oz* (where Dorothy uses acquaintances and family members as "actors" that she can "cast" as characters in her dream), people known to the protagonist appear in altered form in the dream. "Role players" may be given larger parts, such as the man at the register of Winkie's, who becomes Dan in the dream and tells about the strange man behind the restaurant.

Divisions between reality and fantasy are broken down at Club Silencio, just as they are in the Red Room segments of *Twin Peaks*. Emotions pour out—in the Red Room, the Little Man dances, Doppelgängers scream, and Cooper is afraid; at Club Silencio, crying dominates. For whatever reason, this triggers something in Betty and Rita that culminates in the unification of the characters into one (or, if you prefer, the disappearance of

Betty, so that only Rita remains).

We don't know whether the foundation of this process began with crying *per se*, or whether Lynch's love of the Roy Orbison song created the basis for how these themes played out. There's an interesting comment in *Lynch on Lynch*, however, where Chris Rodley brings up the preponderance of crying in the *Twin Peaks* pilot, and Lynch responds with a joking (?) comment about the Orbison song:

Rodley: The pilot episode has a lot of crying in it. Deputy Andy Brennan cries...; both Laura's parents cry...; the school principal and Laura's classmates weep. You seem to like crying. Is that true?

Lynch: Yeah, I guess I am big on that. Girls crying, men crying, women crying, crying in general. It's powerful if they are really feeling it. It's like a yawn: it transfers over....It comes from Roy Orbison, I guess! No. In this case, it's when something cements this identification and it's unleashed. When the person can't speak the rest of a sentence and chokes up in a certain way, you're gone. You know that feeling and it sweeps over you.<sup>14</sup>

This is exactly what happens at Club Silencio. Rebekah Del Rio is "really feeling" the emotions of the song, even though



Diane on the verge of a complete breakdown at the dinner party

she's singing along to a tape recording (though, as noted before, she may not realize this). The feeling "transfers over" to both Betty and Rita, who begin crying themselves. Betty is already emotionally and physically fragile—she begins shaking violently at the end of the magician's performance when a storm appears to be forming within the theater (thunder is heard, and the lights flicker, as if from lightning). But as Del Rio sings, Betty and Rita break down, and soon even Del Rio "can't speak the rest of her sentence," so to speak: she falls to the floor, unable to complete her song. (Of course, the tape still plays, so the song concludes anyway.) But by now, Betty has found the blue box in the purse beside her, and the puzzle of the mysterious key is about to conclude.

There is one other scene in the movie

in which crying plays a notable part. When Diane is on set watching Adam rehearse with Camilla, the director explains to the actor who will be playing the scene, "When she starts to cry, don't pull her towards you. Let her fall into you. Just let her fall. And when you kiss her, it's just a continuation of that move. There's no break." This dialogue is applicable to the earlier scene because when Betty and Rita start to cry, the process of unification of the characters is near completion. There is no force applied; they practically "fall into" each other back at the apartment: Rita has been remade to look like Betty, to become Betty, so there is no reason in the dream for Betty to remain. She disappears just before Rita uses the key to unlock the box—another representation, interestingly, of unification, of two parts becoming one, and in the process completing one quest and opening up another deeper one.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This deeper journey allows the audience to witness—and perhaps even experience to some degree—what is at the core of Diane's identity. A young woman, full of dreams, is unable to separate her fantasy of life in the movies with the reality of struggle, hard work, and repeated rejection that often precedes the successes. Diane lusts after the glamour and stardom, but in the process loses her way and even her soul.

In *WIP 55*, Justin Theroux noted, "[Diane] is in love with so much. She's in love with [Camilla], first and foremost. She's in love with what this girl has, which is celebrity. She's in love with this girl's life, which is money and a relationship with a director....And the fact that she's unable to climax to her own fantasies is deeply moving and disturbing and sad."<sup>15</sup> What Diane is left with, when her dreams and fantasies have lost their power, is anger, bitterness, and despair. Diane has tried to escape into another identity, but in the end, she is forced to accept who she is. When the blue box is opened, it is empty, except for a black void that engulfs the screen, just as the void in Diane's soul has engulfed her.

What makes *Mulholland Drive* a triumphant work of art is that its themes of illusion and identity are not only applicable to life in Hollywood but, ultimately, to life everywhere. Although the filmmaking industry in Los Angeles magnifies these issues, everyone can relate to such struggles and temptations in one's own life. *Mulholland Drive* is, in the end, a cautionary tale about the dangers of losing oneself to illusions and moral corruption, and such warnings will always have resonance.

**[NEXT ISSUE: Believe it or not, even after three interviews and a 15,000+ word essay, we're far from done with *Mulholland*! Be here next time for more interviews and analysis!]**

<sup>15</sup>Justin Theroux Interview, "Wrapped in Plastic 55" (October 2001), p. 6.



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## Letters

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Dear Craig and John,

I was finally impelled to write again after having seen *Mulholland Drive* today. God, what an amazing movie. As the credits rolled, despite my initial confusion, I knew that I liked it. I was just minutely put off by what I feared might have been some gratuitous weirdness thrown into the film, but twenty minutes later, when I finally figured out what most of it meant, Lynch's genius finally hit me. Lynch knows how to build and sustain not only a strong sense of mystery but also one of pervading dread. One of his gifts is to take what on the surface seems truly mundane, like the back of a diner or top of a convenience store or even a light bulb, and then reveal that hidden incomprehensible world behind the mask. Everything is charged with meaning and portent. When we look through Lynch's lens, we look through the eyes of a shaman. It is a world of dreams and spirits, where time loses meaning.

I feel that Lynch has incorporated some of the best elements of various films in *Mulholland Drive*. As one reviewer pointed out, the movie is to some extent a *Moby-Dick* strip like *Last Highway*. I haven't read too much else about the movie, except that at some point the two female leads seem to switch roles, and that the movie becomes increasingly dreamlike and nightmarish. I didn't quite understand or appreciate this apparent "switch" of identities for a long while until I realized much later that much of the first half of the film is Diane's own wishful or deluded fiction of herself and her arrival into the Hollywood of her dreams. It is her Hollywood version of her life, much like we were presented with Fred's own delusion in *Last Highway*. It is no wonder that the airport scene in which Diane (aka Betty) is conversing with the friendly old couple comes across as almost too treacly, to the point of drawing some snickers from the audience I sat with. It is strikingly reminiscent of the closing scene of *Blue Velvet* featuring the fake Bluebird of Happiness. Diane happens to be fortunate enough to be able to stay at her actress-aunt's Hollywood style bungalow, hearkening back to the glamorous days of Hollywood instead of the more realistic, somewhat dingy, apartment that Diane and perhaps most aspiring actresses stay in. There is even a fax machine that conveniently spits out opportunities for auditions. "Betty" would be perfect for the role, but she doesn't get it, not because the director wasn't impressed but because she had to leave to help a friend, and of course even if she did stay, the director was forced by very mysterious circumstances to say of Camilla, "This is the girl." In Diane's fiction, the aspects of Camilla that she hates is personified and displaced into a blond girl who is seen later kissing the real Camilla, and Camilla becomes everything Diane wishes Camilla actually were—a somewhat innocent, helpless, good, and faithful friend and lover. Diane's initial meeting with Camilla is Hollywoodized. Out of Diane's tortured guilt-ridden mind, Camilla is

imagined to survive the hit that "someone-else-besides-Diane" put on her life and ultimately goes to Betty/Diane for help. Their venture into a sexual relationship also becomes beautiful and romanticized instead of raunchy, as a later "real" scene depicts.

Alan, Diane can only maintain the Betty fantasy for so long. After viewing Diane's (or Camilla's) dead and decomposing body in bed, Camilla is further idealized into another copy of Betty until Betty herself disappears in the scene in which the blue box is opened to reveal the reality behind the fiction. It is debatable whether the body in bed is a portent of things to come or whether Diane in the Lynchian version of the afterlife is fantasizing some of her life. Whatever the case, the homeless derelict behind Winkie's diner is apparently the embodiment of the great destroyer and dasher of Hollywood dreams. Opening his blue box lets out the ugly, horrifying reality of trying to make it in the city of dreams. One could safely guess that much of Diane's delusion is not only fueled by guilt but by drugs, in keeping with both Hollywood myth and reality, leading ultimately to the desperate act of taking her own tormented life. The film, interestingly, ends with an enigmatic utterance of a name, as in *Fire Walk With Me*.

The tragedy of existence, in Hollywood or otherwise, is conveyed in Rebekah Del Rio's heartrending rendition of Roy Orbison's "Crying." Is there really such a late night theatre in Hollywood, or is it Lynch's afterlife version of a Greek chorus? I will leave WP for its perceptive readers to answer that.

Bryan Yamashiro  
e-mail

Longtime readers will remember Bryan as the writer of two articles from the early days of WP, "Twin Peaks, *Fallout*, and the Nature of Reality" (#10) and "The Truth is Way Out There" (#12). Good to hear from you again, and thanks for your observations about *Mulholland Drive*.

Not everyone, however, enjoyed *Mulholland* as much as we did:

Dear WP,

This has been a dreadful summer for movies. A film like *Tomb Raider* is fairly easy to get over; by the next day I have already forgotten it. But when a movie by one of my favorite directors does not live up to my hopes and expectations, it can be crushing. It happened with Tim Burton's spillingly bad *Planet of the Apes* remake. But even that film could be forgotten, because David Lynch had a new movie on the way. Unfortunately my viewing of *Mulholland Drive* was the second time I was left with these feelings.

I had eagerly awaited the release of *Mulholland Drive*. I entered the theater today with a smile on my face but exited with a frown of utter disappointment. As *Planet of the Apes* was Burton's worst film, so too is *Mulholland Drive* Lynch's.

I assume that the majority of the film prior to the first love scene between Betty and Rita was the television pilot portion, and that the majority of the scenes following were added for the film. Working off this assumption, even as a pilot *Mulholland Drive* would have been lacking. The search for Rita's true identity and the manipulation of the film director by unknown powers did not draw me in. I never cared about who Rita really was, and I never embraced the mystery. The pilot portion seemed emotionally flat. In comparison, *Twin Peaks*'s pilot was absolutely dripping in emotion. There was something about the way every character was introduced that made me care about them and want to learn more about the world they inhabited. There was nothing like that in *Mulholland Drive*. I had always assumed *Mulholland Drive* was rejected as a TV show because of network politics and an inability to recognize Lynch's brilliance. But perhaps the pilot was rejected because it was simply not that good.

Obviously, Lynch could not be expected to tie up all the loose ends once he realized there was not going to be a show, but what he gave us as an ending was extremely unsatisfying. This did not feel like a movie to me. It felt like a pilot with an almost unrelated short film added to the end. Everything preceding the entrance into the blue box was all but meaningless in relation to everything afterwards. What was the point of including the entire movie director storyline if it was going to be completely abandoned in the latter portion of the film? If the film's ending was going to deal with nothing but the two women (or some version of them), would it not have made sense to pare down the pilot and concentrate that storyline? This would have resulted in a much more cohesive film, instead of a showcase of plot points that are never resolved. Though I am sure it would have been extremely difficult to lose so much material, I still feel that some merciless editing could have made this a much better film.

If viewed on their own, the endings to both the European version *Twin Peaks* and *Mulholland Drive* are amazing pieces of film. But as a stacked on ending created in hopes of turning a TV pilot into a film, neither work. When Betty screamed in horror as the old people moved towards her, she expressed my own horror and frustration at what Lynch was giving me as an ending. It seemed like Lynch, faced with having to create an ending, just reached into his old bag of tricks and pulled out some cool visuals without any meaningful narrative drive or emotion to back them up. No matter how "weird" Lynch's visuals have been in the past, they have always seemed leech with meaning and emotion; but not here. Moments like the lesbian love scenes have all the passion and eroticism of a bad porno. I never thought I would be comparing Lynch's work to bad pornography, but *Mulholland Drive* has left me with no choice.

All of this is discussed to relation to Lynch's other work and what I have come to expect of him.

The film contains moments of brilliance and is far superior to most of the other films out there this year, but as an addition to Lynch's canon, I can only describe *Mulholland Drive* as deeply disappointing.

Kevin Johns  
e-mail

Well, John, if you've read my essay, you know that we've come to very different conclusions. It's interesting to us that you've written your comments after a single viewing of the movie. We held some of your opinions (though not quite as vociferously) after our first time seeing it but changed during subsequent viewings. The more we watch, the more we realize how brilliantly Lynch has integrated the first and second halves. For as much as I despise the weirdness, *Mulholland Drive* is a very tight, compact film. If you have an opportunity to see the film again, drop us a line and let us know what you think.

Dear WP,

I saw the opening screening of *Mulholland Drive* last night at midnight in New York. It's all I hoped it would be: terrifying, funny, erotic, sad, inexplicable.

It actually feels like a greatest-hits collection from David. Every stylistic device/character archetype shows up that you've seen before, but none of it feels predictable. It's the new footage, the last forty-five minutes, that really throws you and makes you question all you've seen. I think the key to understanding it is really an earlier Lynch effort, *The Dream of the Broken Hearted*. It feels like a final Lynch film, like he is wrapping up threads from all his other films à la Kevin Smith with his last Askewiverse film.

Adam Barnick  
e-mail

John and Craig,

I'm just about finished with the *Red Room* article. It is top notch! One observation in regard to "The Painting, Annie, and the Ring." You wrote, "She thinks she hears something outside her door and gets up to look, but nothing is there." Well, kind of. Though I have the *Askerdick* of *FWHM*, I don't have my player in Florida. Yet I can hear faintly on my rather worn VHS copy of it Sarah Palmyer yelling "Laura, Laura" (as heard in the pilot). I must agree that it is a rather frightening scene. (Lynch certainly knows how to capture pure dreamlike terror.) Is Sarah's yelling yet another hint at upcoming events? Is it Laura's subconscious warning her of a very real future, similar to Annie and Dale? Just a thought.

Additionally, I saw *Mulholland Drive* last weekend. Wow—what a ride! The soundtrack's liner notes state that several tracks (i.e. "Pretty So," "Go Get Some," and "Mountains Falling") are from the album *Blue Bob*. Do you have any information? I'm assuming the album will be featured on [davidlynch.com/thefuture](http://davidlynch.com/thefuture). And I picked up a similar music track from *Lost Highway* ("Haunting and Hurting") on the *Mulholland Drive* soundtrack. Did you catch it?

Steven Miller  
e-mail

As far as we can tell, Blue Bob has not been released yet.

Dear WP,

I am writing in regards to the "X-Files Extra" section of *Wrapped in Plastic*. Considering David Duchovny is no longer on the show, could you please put something else in place of "X-Files Extra"? Frankly, X-Files has had enough exposure from the mainstream for years. I've enjoyed the series at times, and I have also wanted to throw my TV out the window when the episodes have been really bad. I tuned out around last season when Doggett came into the picture, not because of the character, but because the series is stale. Will you please consider the following suggestion. As you know, there are several actors, writers, and musicians that have been involved with David Lynch productions over the years. I would like to see more coverage of the works of these artists. I know that the "World Spins" covers what the other artists are doing. However, I would like to see comprehensive coverage, not just a few lines or blurbs. An example is John Lurie. John Lurie had a small part as a piece of trailer trash in *Wild At Heart*. He has not only acted for Lynch, but for Jim Jarmusch as well. John Lurie is also a musician, and he has done many albums and soundtracks. I fully understand the difficulties that you have releasing your publication, and I have been enjoying it for several years.

Ricky D. Snyder  
Portland, NY  
e-mail

If this current season of X-Files turns out to be the last, this topic will be moot. In any event, we've thought of a few ideas of things to do when the "X-Files Extra" section has run its course but haven't made any decisions yet. Whatever the case, we'll continue to cover David Duchovny's future work (including the X-Files DVDs as they're released, plus any future X-Files films) in some form. Stay tuned!

Craig & John,

I'm sure you guys saw David Lynch's appearance on the *Tonight Show* with Jay Leno on Halloween. I'm sure I'm not the first to say this, but Leno is a terrible host. Lynch was about to plug his Web site when Leno jumped in with, "When was the last time you took a vacation." At least he was complimentary about *Mulholland Drive*, although I can see how he would be easily confused by the film if all he walked away from it with was, "It had some sexy stuff in it." In Leno's own words: "It's not for dummies."

I really thought the clip they showed was a terrific choice, showing Diane's jealousy and obsessive love for Camilla during the kiss, and Camilla's subsequent "teasing" of Diane by giving her that look afterwards. I also think that Lynch accidentally gave away more information about MD than he intended. Thus far, all of the publicity I've seen has referred to MD as a film about Betty and Rita. But when Lynch was setting up the clip he called Rita by her "real" name Camilla Rhodes and then very quickly added something about how he wasn't going to tell all the character's names.

I don't have any deep insightful things to say about MD, but I do have some observations that I found interesting. Was it just me, or did Adam's house look like the same one used for the party at Andy's in *Lost Highway*? And the laun character behind Winkie's reminded me, in a sense, as having a similar role in MD as the Man in the Planet did in *Eraserhead*. I think it could be interpreted that the blue box could represent Diane's consciousness/mind and the bum seemed to be a "keeper" of sorts, much like the Man in the Planet was grinding the gears that could represent Henry's consciousness/mind. When Betty and Rita go to the Sierra Bonita apartments to look for Diane Selwyn, the lady living in #12 kind of looks Rita up and down as if to think, "So this is the woman I've been trying to live up to," because later when she turns up in the "reality" I take it that she is an ex-lover of Diane/Betty's that came between her relationship with Camilla/Rita and "now." I found it really interesting how so much of Diane's "dream" was influenced by the later "reality." I hope that all makes sense.

Jason Allan Haase  
Pierce City, MO  
e-mail

We're on the same page with many of your observations about *Mulholland Drive*. Jason, as you'll see from our essay, it didn't occur to us, however, that the woman in #12 was an ex-lover of Diane's. As for Jay Leno, he's not a bad interviewer by late-night talk show standards (David Letterman, Craig Kilborn, Conan O'Brien). These interviews are always frustrating because they are done for "entertainment" purposes, not informational purposes. That's why the time is spent talking about the actor's family and pets and vocations and other nonsense (apparently lots of people find these topics "entertaining") and rarely about the work itself. Charlie Rose on PBS covers meatier topics, but unfortunately he is a bad interviewer. CNN has Larry King, but quite honestly we always forget to watch him. Tom Snyder, we miss you!

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# The World Spins

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## From Hell

**Starring** Johnny Depp (Fred Abberline), Heather Graham (Mary Kelly), Ian Holm (Sir William Gull), Jason Fletmying (Netley), and Robbie Coltrane (Peter Godley)

**Directed by** Allen and Albert Hughes

**Written by** Terry Hayes and Rafael Yglesias

**Based on** the graphic novel by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell

**Produced by** Don Murphy and Jane Hamsher

**Executive Producers** Amy Robinson, Thomas M. Hammel, Allen Hughes, and Albert Hughes

**Director of Photography** Peter Deming

**Production Designer** Martin Childs

**Edited by** Dan Leblental and George Bowers

**Music by** Trevor Jones

David Lynch fans will probably enjoy *From Hell*, the new film by the Hughes Brothers (*Dead Presidents*, *Menace II Society*). Though unrelentingly dark (even *Blue Velvet*, *Lost Highway*, and *Mulholland Drive* are lighthearted by comparison), the film is gorgeously photographed by Lynch's cinematographer Peter Deming and filled with hypnotic dreams and visions (and even includes, in one brief scene, John Merrick, a.k.a. the Elephant Man).

*From Hell* is based on the exhaustively researched graphic novel by Alan Moore (*Watchmen*, *V For Vendetta*, *Miraclemans*) and Eddie Campbell that looks into the Jack the Ripper murders in the Whitechapel district of London in the fall of 1888. The five ritualistic murders of prostitutes spread terror throughout the city, in part because the perpetrator was never caught, and the crimes remain legendary.

It is always difficult to translate a novel to film, and Moore and Campbell's five-hundred-page work, complete with numerous endnotes listing the sources for the events portrayed, was no exception. Fortunately the screenplay was written by two accomplished writers. Terry Hayes's credits include *The Road Warrior*, *Payback*, and *Dead Calm*. Rafael Yglesias wrote the screenplay to *Fearless* based on his own novel. Even with two and a quarter hours, they needed to eliminate huge chunks of the graphic novel and condense and rearrange much more. However, as a work in and of itself, the screenplay is gripping and intense.

Twice Perks alum Heather Graham plays Mary Kelly, a prostitute who sees her friends slaughtered one by one. With few other options, she decides to assist Inspector Fred Abberline (Depp) with his investigation, though because of the proficiency of the murders, there is little she can do but hope that she does not become a victim herself. While we found it a little startling to see Graham in bright red hair (!), she is wonderful in portraying the rising sense of fear that grips the city—as she walks the streets, viewers can see in her face, especially her eyes, a combination of both terror and



Above: Heather Graham in *From Hell*. Left: The first issue of the original *From Hell* comic book.



strength, the refusal to have her life held hostage by the atrocities.

The primary star of the film, however, is Johnny Depp. Though he can always be counted on to provide an interesting performance, the challenge in *From Hell* is formidable. Insp. Abberline is hardly a sympathetic character—he is an opium addict with a grim, humorless personality—but he is the viewers' guide through the investigations. Aside from being a top-notch detective with an uncanny eye for detail, he is plagued with horrific visions and dreams, which he uses to assist him in attempting to track down the killer.

Competing with Depp as the star of the film is the production. The Hughes Brothers have crafted an extraordinary work, aided first and foremost by Peter Deming, whom Lynch fans will know from his incredible work on *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*—in fact, it was his work on *Lost Highway* that caught the Hughes's attention. *From Hell* required the same ability to create images from a dark palette—most of the action takes place at night and in dark, narrow cobblestone alleys. As in *LH*, Deming's proficiency at such scenes is at times astonishing. The film is also aided by an extraordinary score by Trevor Jones (*Last of the Mohicans*, *Excalibur*, *Dark City*), who perfectly captures the uneasy atmosphere of the city with a series of haunting compositions. (The only flaw in the soundtrack is a sudden break during the last half of the end credits for a terrible Marilyn Manson song.)

As noted earlier, John Merrick, the Elephant Man, makes a brief appearance. It turns out that Merrick lived within walking distance of the murders. Albert Hughes said, "He was actually cared for in a hospital down the street. There's some weird connections with him during that time period." The scene in the film has Merrick being introduced—and undressed—to horrified physicians, a scene that also appears in Lynch's *The Elephant Man*.

*From Hell* is an intense experience. Unlike Lynch's work—even in *Lost Highway*—there are few levitating moments. The screenplay also lacks the metaphorical power of the graphic novel, though Yglesias intended for it to come through: "Whether the British monarchy was literally involved in the Ripper murders doesn't diminish the power of the accusation leveled at the ruling



Johnny Depp as Det. Abberline

Photos © 2001 20th Cen. Fox. Comic © Alan Moore/Eddie Campbell

class. That the authorities refused even to consider the possibility the suspect might be wealthy speaks volumes about the Victorian era. Society's ills were viewed exclusively as the fault of the poor and the lower class." The film also alters the emphasis of the story from a psychological examination of Jack the Ripper (in the graphic novel, his identity is revealed early; the majority of the work looks at the psyche of such a man) to a more straightforward murder mystery. For us, these are fair changes (we haven't seen anything from Moore commenting on the film), reflecting the different media and, in particular, condensing the story to a two-hour film. If you missed *From Hell* at the theater, be sure to pick up the DVD when it gets released. (And by all means drop by a comic book store and grab the graphic novel!)

#### DVD News

We had hoped to have the *Twain Peaks* DVDs by press time, but their delay from December 4 to the 18th means that we will have our review next issue. Enough advance word has leaked out that we're eager to see them and especially listen to the audio commentaries. It's possible that we'll post some initial reactions onto

the news section of our Web site, so keep checking [www.wrappedinplastic.com](http://www.wrappedinplastic.com) for the latest!

Speaking of the Web site, it is now possible to order WIP back issues and subscriptions online with a credit card. (Overseas customers find this particularly helpful, though of course it's great for domestic folks, too!) From the home page, click on the "Back Issues" link, and you'll find yourself in the Win-Mill Productions Online Store, where you can also order copies of *Spectrum*, our general film/television mag, and other assorted goodies, including miscellaneous *Twain Peaks* items that are also offered in the magazine. We don't have all of these miscellaneous products online yet, but we're adding things all the time, so check back often. For the time being, though, copies of *Wrapped in Plastic* have never been easier to order!

#### Et Cetera

A monstrously long *Mulholland Drive* essay this issue, plus the review of *From Hell*, restricted the space available for other "World Spins" items, but don't worry. We'll be back here next time!



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# X-Files Extra!

## X-Files Season 9: Business As Usual

We don't care what Chris Carter says or doesn't say, or how much he prevaricates: the current X-Files story arc is begun with the seventh-season episode "all things."

You remember "all things." Airing six episodes after "Closure," the apparent end of the Samantha Mulder story arc that had driven a good part of the drama for over six seasons, "all things" was Gillian Anderson's triumph, an episode she wrote and directed. The story examined critical moments, critical crossroads in a person's life, and how seemingly insignificant events or accidents can have far-reaching consequences in that life. The episode is a marvel, and some sequences are truly breathtaking (aided by Moby's hypnotic "The Sky Is Broken"—ironically, the song on *Play* that immediately precedes "My Weakness," which gave the "Closure" episode such a stunning finale). "X-Files Extra" has somewhat of a reputation for being too harsh on *XP*, but this "harshness" stems from a frustration in seeing great opportunities squandered repeatedly. However, as "all things" (and other episodes that we've noted in the past) reveals, when *The X-Files* was clicking, it was riveting and about as good as anything else on television in the nineties. (Okay, okay, "all things" actually first aired in April, 2000, but our point remains.)

Why do we bring up "all things" at all? Not only to make a point later about squandered opportunities, but to say that—despite however much *XP* creator Chris Carter wants to equivocate—this is the episode in which FBI agents Dana Scully and Fox Mulder finally slept together (and, hence, the episode in which Scully got pregnant). The visual clues there and in following episodes are clear, and any denial is cheating the audience.

Longtime *XP* fans know that Scully was unable to conceive, yet she reveled in the seventh-season finale ("Réquiem") that she was pregnant. She finally gave birth in the eighth-season finale, "Existence," as aliens for whatever sought to take her baby from her. But at the last minute, they just watched and drove away. The episode ends with the much-talked-about scene of Scully and Mulder holding the baby, embracing, and kissing, with Mulder suggesting (though, in typically frustrating *XP* style not specifically saying) that they both knew of their love for each other, and that he was the father, regardless of the details of how Scully was able to conceive. With the introduction of Scully's baby, a new long-term story arc took hold.

The ninth season, which began with the November 11 episode "Nothing Important Happened Today" (and, being a two-parter, continued the following week) created special problems. Anderson was back, but David Duchovny was gone, so there had to be some explanation for why Mulder was not seen. (He was no longer an FBI agent, which explained his disappearance from the agency; viewers needed an explanation for why Mulder was no longer on screen.) And with the Samantha storyline wrapped up (not to mention the deaths of Cigarette Smoking Man and Alex Krycek, two strong, engaging supporting characters), *The X-Files* needed a new direction, period.

What we get with the story of Scully's baby, unfortunately, is the same thing, only different. The infant is the product (or maybe it isn't) of a long-running military cloning experiment aimed at producing an unstoppable super soldier. The FBI is involved in this conspiracy (or maybe not). FBI deputy director Alvin Kersh is trying to help agent John Doggett expose the conspiracy (or maybe Kersh is part of the conspiracy himself). FBI director Brad Follmer is manipulating things behind the scenes, trying to get Doggett fired or killed (or maybe assisting him). Shannon McMahon of the Justice Department (and an old friend of Doggett) is a super soldier prototype who hates what she is (or maybe not) and kills a couple of government workers involved in spiking the Maryland water supply because she wants to expose the conspiracy (or perhaps



Shannon McMahon (Lucy Lawless) in *The X-Files*

© 2001 Twentieth Century Fox

wants to further the conspiracy by eliminating those who could expose it).

As the foundation of a story arc, a look into the whys and hows of Scully's baby is not necessarily a bad idea. And even though we groaned at the introduction of the super soldier, it's not terrible if combined with the previous arc of the government trying to do whatever it can to protect the planet from alien invasion. There were the hybrid experiments, for example, that were to make humans immune to the aliens or alien black oil or whatever. (Did this ever get resolved? Does anything on this show ever get resolved? After a while the stories get so convoluted that we're not sure where they're going, where they've been, or if they've even been concluded. And if they have, the endings haven't been memorable.)

Anyway, the super soldier ("bio-engineered combat unit") thing wasn't the greatest idea back in 1941 with the creation of Captain America, but it was like most comic book origins—a frivolous bit of goofiness that was over and done with in a few pages so that the real stories could be told. Now, with *The X-Files*, it's been embellished with lots of scientific blather and cloning experiments and governmental conspiracy. Unfortunately, we're still left with the sight of bullets bouncing off one of the super soldiers, and, well, it just looks silly, even within the context of the

XF world. How can cloning produce life-like skin that can resist bullets? Or soldiers that literally can't be killed?

But these are really minor concerns. The greater problem is that none of the characters are the least bit believable, as their motivations are indecipherable. Assistant Director Skinner alternately aids and hinders Doggett's investigation. Scully either does or doesn't want to know the truth about her baby, depending on the time of day. Mulder left town because he believed his life was in danger (he's supposed to believe this Mulder?) and the life of the baby (as if leaving the scene would help).

On one hand, we can't really blame Carter. This is the formula that has worked for eight years. The characters of Deep Throat, Mr. X, Cigarette Smoking Man, and Skinner never did make much sense or have much consistency. They would align themselves for or against Mulder not because of any well-devised story or character profile, but according to the weekly demands of particular episodes, and whichever would create specific interesting, intriguing, or engaging scenes.

At least back then, there remained the always-watchable Mulder and Scully. Now we're left with Doggett and Monica Reyes. There's nothing wrong with the characters or the actors per se, except that Carter has yet to give us any real reason why they're investigating X-Files in the FBI. This is especially important, because viewers know that the Fox network wants to keep the cash cow going, milking it for as long as possible. It's impossible not to watch these shows without thinking that the actors are participating in this scam. This is unfair to them—they're doing their best with the material they're given—so it falls on Carter and the producers to come up with some justification for the existence of the characters and the show. They had the entire eighth season as a transitional year to get this worked out, and they've still failed to find the right formula.

This is all the more disappointing because for the two-part

premiere, the show brought in some fairly big names to spice things up. Cary Elwes, best known from *The Princess Bride*, plays director Follmer. Presumably Kersh's boss, Follmer seems to have had a relationship with Reyes a couple of years ago and has a wonderfully skeiny air about him. He's practically mocking Doggett, Reyes, and even Skinner in every scene. The XF producers also hired Lucy Lawless, fresh off her stint on *Xena: Warrior Princess*. She plays the prototype super soldier Shannon McMahon, and it was designed as a possibly recurring role, but Lawless's publicist says the actress will not return. It's not hard to guess why. The role was dull, poorly conceived, with nowhere interesting to go. One can scarcely imagine why the producers would waste such a casting opportunity on such a bland role, outside of having her nude in roughly half her scenes. Lawless must have been thinking, "Putting XF on the résumé might look good, but for this I left running around in leather in New Zealand?"

What we're left with, then, is the same old stuff. More vague conspiracies to be investigated. More incomprehensible character motivations. More wonderful possibilities of quality acting, nice photography, and interesting guest stars, all in the service of cotton candy stories. Maybe they'll eventually lead to something worthwhile, but right now they dissolve into little more than fascinating snippets.

The end of part two has such a snippet. Kersh tells Doggett that on July 4, 1776, King George III wrote in his diary, "Nothing important happened today," and that sometimes revolutions begin small, such that even kings can miss them if they're not looking in the right places. It's a neat scene, but we keep wondering, Is this a metaphor for the rest of the season? Let's hope so. In the meantime, with her reduced screentime on the show, maybe Anderson can find the time to write and direct another episode. That would be something to look forward to.



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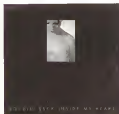
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Pictured above (L-R): WHP's Bravo TP Flyer; Bravo TP promo Card; The Devil's Guard



Pictured above (L-R): Julee Cruise Promo CD; TP FWWM Promo Card; Meridian Soundtrack; Welcome to Twin Peaks.

## Magazines

**TV GUIDE** (May 5, 1990) - Although not cover-featured, inside is an eight-page *Twin Peaks* special report that includes eight black-and-white photos. There's also a half-page *Twin Peaks* ad. The cover is wrinkled, but again it's not *Peaks* anyway. **\$10.00** (good+)

**WRAPPED IN PLASTIC** (#5; June 1993) - Catherine Coulson interview, Peaks/Blue Velvet connections; Peaks in Germany; and much more! 24 pages. **\$30.00** (near mint)

**WRAPPED IN PLASTIC** (#8; Dec. 1993) - Frank Silva (Killer Bob) cover and interview; Mark Frost interview; Peaks in France; Julee Cruise's Voice of Love reviewed; and much more. 32 pages. **\$35.00** (near mint)

**WRAPPED IN PLASTIC** (#12; second printing, Oct. 1994) - X-Files cover, first-season review, and Gillian Anderson interview; UFOs in *Twin Peaks*; MacLachlan in *Roswell*; and The Trio; behind-the-scenes at the filming of *FWWM*. Our best-selling issue to date. 48 pages with a card-stock cover. **\$30.00** (near mint)

## Miscellaneous Items

**BRAVO TWIN PEAKS PRDMD FLYER** - A two-color 5.5 x 8.5 flyer that folds out to 8.5 x 22; includes episode checklist and brief character profiles. A cool rare item! **\$7.00** postpaid (fine)

**BRAVO TWIN PEAKS PRDMD CARD** - 5.5 x 8.5 full-color promo card. **\$5.00** postpaid (near mint)

**THE DEVIL'S GUARD** by Talbot Mundy - Rare 1968 Avon paperback novel of Jimgrim's adventures in Tibet and his encounters with the Duggas and the Black and White Lodges! The parallels to *Twin Peaks* are quite interesting (see the article in *WHP* 3), and one of Windom Earle's lines of dialogue is a direct quote from the book (which was written back in 1926)! Whenever we've offered these for sale, they always go quickly; we'd recommend e-mailing or calling in advance to see if it's still in stock, because we have only one copy. **\$40.00** (vg/fine)

**JULEE CRUISE "ROCKIN' BACK INSIDE MY HEART" PRDMD CD** - This very rare disc has two versions of the song, one from the *Floating Into the Night* album plus another shorter version. Lynch co-wrote and produced the song (with Angelo Badalamenti), and we think even took the photos that appear on the front and back covers. A very cool collectible from 1989! **\$20** (insert card has slight wear)

**LANDMARK 1992 TWIN PEAKS CALENDAR** - This is the much sought after calendar published by Landmark in the fall of 1991. Twelve months worth of full-color photos! But it's not 1992, you say? Hey, in 2020 the calendar will be accurate again. Until then, just enjoy the pictures from one of the most valuable *Twin Peaks* collectibles. And one of the best things about this calendar is that it is mint: it is still sealed in its original shrinkwrapping! Wow! We have only one, so you may want to call or e-mail to reserve it before ordering. **\$60.00**

**MERIDIAN SOUNDTRACK** by Pino Donaggio - 1991 film (also known as *Loss of the Beat*) co-stars Sherilyn Fenn in one of her more sizzling roles. Donaggio's best-known work may be his music for Brian De Palma (*Carrie*, *Dressed to Kill*; though he also scored *Zelig* & *Me*, which co-starred David Lynch!), but to be honest the reason to get this is for the great Fenn photos. As far as we could find out, this soundtrack is out of print. We have two of these; the booklets are in different conditions. **\$35.00** (booklet has slight wear); **\$30.00** (booklet has a couple of folds)

**TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME PRDMD CARD** - 5x7 full-color promo. It seems like we've had these forever. Well, our stock is finally starting to run low. Don't wait much longer! **\$12.00** postpaid (near mint)

**WELCOME TO TWIN PEAKS** - This unauthorized paperback by Scott Krickelbine was pulled from the market in 1990 and is now extremely difficult to find. Every time we find copies, they sell very quickly. We've caught a lucky streak and located a few more copies. Don't wait, or they'll probably be gone! **\$40.00** (fine), **\$35.00** (fine-), **\$32.00** (fine-); this copy is a fine+very fine except that it has an inscription on the title page, "Happy Birthday Suzanne!"

## SHIPPING INFORMATION

**U.S.:** \$5 postage for the first item, 50¢ each thereafter, up to \$7. (No postage needs to be included for "postpaid" items.) **CANADA:** \$5 postage for the first item (except "postpaid" items), \$1 per item thereafter. **EVERYWHERE ELSE:** \$5 postage per item (except "postpaid" items); \$10 for the calendar. See page 31 for acceptable forms of payment! **Foreign orders:** please list alternates in case we sell out of your first choice!

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#3 (Dec. 1993) Chaz Kelly (Star Trek: Voyager) and his crew guide us to female directors Souly (14 Feb) and Howard (14 March). Lots of DVD clips. 40 pp., card stock cover. \$5.95 (air mail)



#4 (July 1994) A film for a woman's guide. Quilley's in First Fests. Bing Adams (Hugues) interview. Lee Sander in the 1994 (14 Feb) and card stock cover. Supply low! \$5.95 (air mail)



#7 (July 1996) Spectacular new episode guide. D.J. Lively (Star Trek: Voyager) interview. The 1996 (14 Feb) and card stock cover. \$5.95 (air mail)



#10 (May 1997) Chaz Kelly (Star Trek: Voyager) interview. The 1997 (14 Feb) and card stock cover. \$5.95 (air mail)



#11 (Oct. 1997) Kevin Sorbo and Barry Vaniller (Star Trek: Voyager) interview. The 1997 (14 Feb) and card stock cover. \$5.95 (air mail)



#12 (Jan. 1998) Ted Raimi (Interview) and his crew guide us to the 1998 (14 Feb) and card stock cover. \$5.95 (air mail)



#15 (Sept. 1998) Long time analysis of the 1998 (14 Feb) and card stock cover. \$5.95 (air mail)



#18 (Mar. 1999) Long time analysis of the 1999 (14 Feb) and card stock cover. \$5.95 (air mail)



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#26 (Apr. 2001) Buffy (Star Trek: Voyager) interview. The 2001 (14 Feb) and card stock cover. \$5.95 (air mail)



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For *Wrapped in Plastic* and *Spectrum* back issue orders, use the U.S. postpaid price, but pay with a Canadian Postal Money Order in U.S. funds! *Wrapped in Plastic* one-year (13-issue) subscriptions are \$37 (U.S.). Again, pay with a money order from the Canadian post office to avoid delays. For other money orders, add \$5.

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### Overseas Shipping Costs

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### How to Pay

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### (2) Other Money Orders

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### (3) Credit Card Payments

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### (4) U.S. Cash

For some readers, it's easier (and cheaper) to get U.S. dollars (cash) than money orders or bank checks. If you do this, send the order well wrapped and by registered mail.

If you have further questions, write to us at the address below.

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